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Carrié Paultre
(Karye Polt)
1924-1999

Elementary:

- Bryant C. Freeman, *Survival Haitian*, 4th edition. Port-au-Prince: La Presse Evangélique; Lawrence: University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies, 1999.
- Bryant C. Freeman, *Chita Pa Bay: Elementary Readings in Haitian Creole, with Illustrated Dictionary*, revised edition. Port-au-Prince: Editions Bon Nouvèl, 1990.
- Bryant C. Freeman and Jowel Laguerre, *Ayiti Cheri: A Brief Introduction to Haitian, with Grammar, Conversations, Exercises, and Glossary*. In preparation.

Intermediate:

- Bryant C. Freeman, *Ti Koze Kreyòl: A Haitian-Creole Conversation Manual*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Bon Nouvèl, 1987.
- Carrié Paultre, *Wòch nan Solèy: Revised and Annotated Edition for Speakers of English*, ed. Bryant C. Freeman. Lawrence: University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies, 2001.
- Bryant C. Freeman, ed., *Ann Bay Lodyans*, revised edition. Lawrence: University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies; Port-au-Prince: Editions Bon Nouvèl, 2000. Sixteen short volumes of amusing Haitian folktales in Haitian.

Reference:

- Bryant C. Freeman and Jowel Laguerre, *Haitian-English Dictionary*, 3rd edition. Lawrence: University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies; Port-au-Prince: La Presse Evangélique, 2000.

Carrié Paultre

TONTON LIBEN

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Revised Edition



**Institute of Haitian Studies
University of Kansas**

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INTRODUCTION

How does one explain the emergence and rapid growth of a body of literature in a language which for some three centuries existed almost exclusively in oral form?

On an intellectual level, Haitian-language literature can be seen as part of a raising of consciousness, a feeling of self-respect which had its most tangible beginnings in the 1920s with the work of scholars and leaders such as Dr. Jean Price-Mars. Spurred on in no small part by the emotional shock of the U.S. Occupation, an entire generation of Haitian thinkers came to realize that they were Haitians and not merely displaced Frenchmen. With this realization came a new awareness of the intrinsic value of their own cultural heritage, including two of Haiti's unique traditions: the Haitian language, and Voodoo. However, for a society and a language to achieve a full sense of dignity was required the sanctification which only the written word can confer. Thus in the 1940s a Haitian elite began the search for a rational codification of this society's true language. Concurrently began the logical step of attempting to teach the mass of the Haitian people to read and write in Haitian, the only language they had ever known. With literacy and learning it was fervently hoped would come progress and well-being.

On a more practical level, there was the obvious and immediate need to create a body of literature for this new group of readers. Utilitarian texts on agriculture and hygiene were doubtless of prime importance, yet there persisted the need for a written literature of the imagination to express the feelings and aspirations of a people long silent. Haitian reality had long been expressed, but in French, a language essentially foreign to the Haitian masses. The time for a literary tradition in Haitian had arrived.

Thus with Carrié Paultre and his fellow writers we witness the start of a phenomenon rare in the twentieth century: the birth of a literature. The challenge was immense, the possibilities limitless.

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Carrié Paultre was born March 8, 1924, into an old, distinguished Protestant family of Saint-Marc, in that immediate region of Haiti where most of the present story takes place. He was trained as an agronomist at Haiti's agricultural school at Damien, near Port-au-Prince, after completing his primary education in Saint-Marc and his secondary studies in the capital. Beginning in 1948, he served for two years as an agronomist for the Haitian Department of Agriculture on the Central Plateau, but the death of his father necessitated his return to Saint-Marc to direct the family coffee-export business. Then from 1961-63 he again served as an agronomist, this time in the program for the development of the Artibonite Valley. However, anyone with too much intelligence, energy, and a sincere desire to improve the lot of his fellow Haitians was seen as a possible threat, and thus in late 1963 he was fired by the notorious President François Duvalier ("Papa Dòk"). He was about to accept a tempting job offer to work in Zaire, when at the last moment came a call from H. Ormonde McConnell, who was so instrumental in establishing Haitian as a written language.

The recently formed Protestant Committee on Literacy and Literature (CPAL) needed a well-educated Haitian Protestant to lead its efforts to provide written expression for the Haitian language. Carrié Paultre was their choice. The progression from agronomist to 'professional Creolist' was less radical than might at first appear: from serving his country in a more immediate context, he went on to work in a more far-reaching capacity.

Thus the Protestant monthly *Boukan* first appeared in January 1964, with Carrié Paultre as editor and chief writer. The title, meaning “Bonfire,” was chosen to convey a message of light, warmth - and practicality. Of main concern were farming, animal husbandry, infant care, and building. To this was added other material such as Bible passages, news, poems, proverbs, riddles, and drawings. Almost from the start, however, Carrié Paultre began to compose for *Boukan* a series of short, original novels published in serial form. In addition, he undertook four translations published in book form: two epistolary novels of Walter Trobisch (*Mwen te Renmen yon Fi* and *Mwen Renmen yon Jenn Gason*), an adaptation of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (*Traka yon Kretyen pandan Vwayaj li*), and a tale of Leon Tolstoy *Where There is Love* (*Kote ki gen Lanmou*).

As part of the financial and political difficulties afflicting Haiti, after 28 years *Boukan* ceased in 1992 to appear regularly, with only an occasional issue published subsequently. For the next seven years Carrié Paultre acted as distributor for the Port-au-Prince region of “Pidy,” the family coffee, peanut butter, and jam business located in Saint-Marc. His work with the Haitian language did not cease, however, and he - along with Reverend Roger Désir, Pastor Pauris Jean-Baptiste, and Pastor Edner Jeanty - prepared the 1999 Haitian edition of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Our long friendship began in 1980 when I was preparing the first textbook edition of the present work. We would meet almost every afternoon, when I would have the privilege of having the author himself explain various facets of *Tonton Liben*, leading to insights reflected in the Notes presented here. In 1998, at his request, I agreed to serve as editor for all his novels as well as translations. The novels had originally appeared in serial form in *Boukan*, with only four later reprinted in book form - and these had long been out of print. To the best of our knowledge,

only he and I had complete collections of *Boukan*, and thus the novels of a writer sometimes called “the Haitian Balzac,” would in fact have been lost to the world. We had our last working session, on the veranda of Port-au-Prince’s famous Hotel Oloffson, on a Thursday morning. The following Monday, 8 February 1999, occurred the sudden death of one of Haiti’s greatest writers. His funeral, in the capital’s main Baptist church where he had taught Sunday school for decades, was attended by many hundreds of people.

Carrié Paultre’s thirteen novels and four translations have been reproduced in separate, inexpensive editions under my editorship, using the official orthography, and with small editorial changes inspired by his wishes. A collected, bound edition of his thirteen completed novels and three unfinished novels, along with a listing of the proverbs which play so prominent a role in his work, as well as an alphabetical list of his characters, is also in progress, as well as a concordance of all his novels with alphabetical and descending-order word-frequency lists. Already completed are a separate concordance and word-frequency lists for *Tonton Liben*. His two outstanding masterpieces, *Tonton Liben* and *Wòch nan Solèy*, appear in addition as separate textbook editions for speakers of English.

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Carrié Paultre’s first two novels dramatize the twin poles of attraction of Haitian life: town vs. country life, or *lavil* vs. *andeyò* - with the latter winning out. In 1965 appeared *Ti Jak* (republished in book form in 1970), the story of a hard-working peasant boy sent to pursue his studies in the town. Town life captivates him, as does a town girl, Mago. He is faced with the dilemma of having to choose between a comfortable career in town with her, or returning to help his ailing family in the country. In the end, “*Ti Jak ale, Mago rantre.*” Country life has triumphed.

The temptations of town life are even stronger in the 1966 novel *Lerison*, republished in book form in 1975. Lerison is lured into town by a well-paid mill job, falls in with bad company, and over a three-year period undergoes a serious change of character. Finally, with his health threatened, he returns home to the country to recuperate. Thanks to its purifying effects, he finds health, religion, and love. Simple country life has again triumphed.

With *Amarant* in 1967-68, republished in book form in 1976, the writer reveals a new maturity in his literary artistry. Set entirely in Cape Haitian, the two central characters are Ti Mak, a would-be polished “lady-killer,” and Amarant, who has come from the small town of Port-Margot to learn sewing. It is an introspective love story portraying the gradual character transformation of Ti Mak as he comes to know Amarant. Essentially, it contrasts superficial conquests with love, while revealing underlying assumptions concerning love and marriage in Haitian society. Two supporting characters, Lik and Lala, introduce subtle thematic variations which add depth to the plot.

In subsequent years were to appear ten more novels in serial form: *Kote Wout la ye?* (1968), *Mànwela* (1969-71), *Tonton Liben* (1975-1976, republished in book form in 1978 and as a textbook in 1982), *Wòch nan Solèy* (1981-82), *Woman Labadi: Si m te konnen* (1982-83), *Se konnen ki fè* (1984-85), *Depi nan Ginen* (1985-87), *Nikola, Moun Senmak* (1987-88), *Lavalas pa ka pote l ale* (1989-90), *Andeyò Lakay te pi bon* (1990-91), in addition to three unfinished stories: *Timepriz* (1974), *Zèt Lakay Granpapa l* (1991-92), and *Kazal* (1996). All are couched in the natural, down-to-earth style of which he was such a master, and continue to prove that Carrié Paultre was a born storyteller. All are firmly based within the Haiti he knew so well, with minute details of the culture’s everyday life, running the gamut from village marketplace to Voodoo to the consequences of national politics. To have read and understood his works is to have gained a deep insight into Haitian reality, both good and bad.

Outstanding among his works are two novels which portray the entire saga of Haitian history for much of the twentieth century: *Tonton Liben*, Haitian reality as seen through the life of one humble man; and after a five-year hiatus in his creativity, *Wòch nan Solèy*, Haitian reality as seen through the life of one humble woman.

Tonton Liben is a sort of Haitian everyman of his times, symbolizing the trials and tribulations of a people and of a nation. There is no important event in Haitian life, from 1902 until the mid-1960s, which is not chronicled. The rise and fall of *Tonton Liben* traces the vicissitudes of much of the Haitian nation, ever dependent upon two essential factors: politics, and climate. It is the political unrest of his country which is responsible even for his birth; it defines his education, his first profession, his rise to local power, and his sudden downfall. The political situation continues to shape his life as he strives to recover, and hurricane Hazel devastates what little he has been able to salvage.

As the author explained during the course of our many conversations, the genesis of *Tonton Liben* occurred when two elements came together in his mind: a song, and a chronology. The song is an old Creole melody having only partial bearing on the final story, but where misfortune nonetheless prevails:

*Mwen pa gen chans ak Tonton Liben,
Se rann sèvis bay tèt chaje.
Madanm lan ale tribinal,
Li pote rapò pou Liben.
O! . . . Tonton Liben!
Men lapolis nan do ou.*

*I have no luck with old man Liben,
Helping him results in worries.
The lady went to court*

*To make a charge against Liben.
Oh! . . . Old Man Liben!
Now the police are on your back.*

And the chronology is simply that of the life of Haiti in the twentieth century.

By the well-consecrated device of the flashback, the author recreates the setting of the traditional Haitian story-telling session, or *lodyans*. First a group of disrespectful young men, and then an enigmatic old woman smoking her pipe, invite Bòs Dò to become, in effect, our narrator. With Chapter 2 begins the chronological series of events leading inexorably to the destitute old man eking out an existence under a tree by the roadside. The author is effectively playing games with our hopes from the very start of his narrative; we know how the story is to end, yet with each new turn of events in Liben's highly varied life, we continually hope that all will come out for the best. However, since at the same time we know the ending, we know this cannot be. One is reminded of Greek tragedy where the *dénouement* was well known to the audience from the beginning, yet where hope was continually being created, only to be dashed. At the end, the author returns us to the original story-telling session. The tragic circle is complete.

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The revised edition presented here is based upon a word-for-word comparison with the original text as it appeared in *Boukan* June 1975-December 1976, with several additional editorial changes made by Carrié Paultre. The separate edition of 1978 inadvertently omitted various key words and even whole sentences. The spelling system, as stated above, is the official one promulgated by the Haitian government in 1979 and now used by virtually all those publishing in the language. The

drawings are those of the 1978 edition, by the Haitian artist Astrel Gilles.

The student familiar with the 1,157 different terms used in *Tonton Liben* will have made considerable progress toward mastery of this fascinating language and culture.

I wish to express my thanks to Carrié Paultre for his generous help. In his usual affable manner, he provided a wealth of information which would have been available from no other source. Thanks are due also to Father Roger Désir and to Jowel Laguerre, both of whom helped resolve a number of problems, as well as to Marjorie Acsenvil for technical aid in the preparation of the present text. Valuable assistance in preparing the Notes, Questions, Synopses, and Glossary was provided by Glinda G. Griner and Eric R. Hausler as part of the Seminar in the Haitian language at the University of Kansas. Finally none of this, as well as the other reeditions of the works of Carrié Paultre, would have been possible without the computer genius of Lynn Porter.

Lawrence, Kansas
June 2001

Bryant C. Freeman

Koze sou Liv la

Tonton Liben se yon ti liv byen enteresan. Se yon bèl ti istwa Carrié Paultre rakonte nou nan ti liv sa a. Se istwa lavi yon nèg Dayiti depi li tou piti jouk li mouri. Mezanmi, “lavi malere se mistè” vre wi! N a wè kijan lavi yon malere abitan ka chaje ak pwoblèm. Se vre gen 5 de fwa li konn gen yon ti kè kontan, men pifò lavi a se tèt chaje, se kè sere l ap viv. Se sòti nan yon traka tonbe nan yon lòt. Se pa ti kras pwoblèm malere Liben an jwenn nan lavi a. Li pase kont tray li. Men se yon nèg ki gen kè. Menm lè sitirasyon an pi mangonmen, li menm ak 10 madanm li, Selyaniz, yo mare ren yo pou yo kontinye ap lite ak lavi a.

Lè n ap li istwa lavi nèg yo rele Liben an, nou gen pou nou mande tèt nou detwa fwa si se pa yon nèg nou konnen. Nou kwè se yon moun nou kontre kèk kote deja, 15 tank istwa lavi nonm lan sanble ak pa anpil lòt Ayisyen k ap debat, k ap trimen, k ap rale rèd pou yo sòti nan mizè a, k ap fè jefò pou fanmi yo ka pi byen pase jan yo menm yo te blije viv la.¹

Yon lòt bagay ki fè ti liv la enteresan ankò se jan 20 Karye Polt² ekri l la. Li ekri li yon jan tou senp, ki fè nou kwè se tandè n ap tandè yon lodyans, se koute n ap koute yon granmoun k ap tire yon kont, se kòmki dire nou chita arebò tab la, anba tonnèl la, nan veye defen an, n ap koute bès Dò k ap esplike nou tout viretounen lavi malere 25 a. Se kòm si nou chita anba pye mapou a, n ap gade abitan

yo ap boule ak lavi a. Se konsa tou li vin fè nou chonje anpil bagay ki pase nan peyi a depi lè blan pran peyi a,³ ak tout lòt malè ki tonbe sou li jouk kounyeya.

Tout bagay sa yo, se sa k fè nou kontan li Tonton Liben anpil. Lè ou konmanse li l, nanpwen mwayen rete toutan ou pa fini l.

Se yon gwo jefò Carrié Paultre fè lè li ekri liv sa a, e li merite anpil konpliman, anpil ankourajman. Se yon bon egzanp li bay lòt moun k ap ekri yo, lè li chwazi pou l ekri istwa yon nèg peyi a ak tout chaplè pwoblèm pèp ayisyen an, pou nou wè kisa nou ta ka fè pou nou rive chanje sitirasyon an. Nou bezwen anpil moun ki pou kontinye ekri an kreyòl, pou moun k ap aprann li yo kapab jwenn bagay ki enteresan pou yo li, osinon yo pral bliye sa yo fin aprann lan.⁴

Se pou tout moun kole tèt yo ansanm pou plis moun nan peyi a aprann li ak ekri nan lang manman yo. Se sèl jan pou nou wete pèp la nan twou kote li ye a.

*Marie Marcelle Buteau Racine
Wachintonn, lete 1977*

¹pou fanmi yo... viv la. “in order that their families can be better off than the way they themselves were obliged to live.”

²Karye Polt proper names in Haitian can follow either the “French” spelling, as on page xvii, line 2 and page xviii, line 7, or the more phonetic Haitian spelling as here.

³Haiti was first occupied by the United States 28 July 1915 - 14 August 1934.

⁴lan modifies the preceding sa; see Grammar Reminders 1 and 2d.

Chapit 1 - Yon Veye



“Lè ou wè zo sou gran chemen, konnen li te gen vyann anwo l.”¹

Jou aswè sa a, lapli te fèk fin tonbe. Te fè nwa deyò a. Chak kout zeklè ki te fèt te klere gran chemen an tou blanch. Men malgre sa, te gen anpil moun nan lari a. Yo te pwofite anbeli lapli a te bay la, pou yo te fè yon rive nan veye a.

Wi se vre, te gen yon veye ki t ap fèt nan katye a. Se veye tonton Liben.² Tout moun nan kanton an te konn tonton Liben. Se yon vye ti granmoun tou mizerab, ki te konn chita anba mapou a. Se la li te moute pòs li chak maten. Depi solèy ap balize dèyè mòn lan, tonton Liben pran ralfò l ak pakèt pit li epi kalbas dlo l, li vin chita nan mouda mapou ki bay sou gran chemen an. Rive la, li pase toutlasentjounen an ap trese tetyè pou vann ak moun k ap pase sou chemen an. Se yon tonton ki te gen konsyans, li te bay bon travay solid. Depi l vann ou yon tetyè pou yon zannimo, se mouri kite.³ Se sa k fè pa gen moun ki pa t konn tonton Liben.

Te gen yon lòt tonton yo te rele bòs Dò ki te konn vin chita anba mapou a tou. Men li menm, se kann kale li te konn vann. Li te toujou vini ak gwo pakèt kann zannanna pou l kale epi vann ak medam epi timoun k ap pase sou chemen an. Se pa ti byen de (2) tonton sa yo te byen.

Se rezon sa a ki fè, malgre tout fredri a, bòs Dò te degaje l vin nan veye a. Lè l rive anba tonnèl la, te deja gen kèk jenn ti mesye chita arebò yon tab ap jwe domino. Nan mitan tab la, te gen yon vye ti lanp tèt gridap⁴ ap plede bay lafimen. Men gen lè lapli a te vin ak van, li te voye anpil dlo anba tonnèl la, paske tout bagay te mouye nèt, ni

tab la, ni ban yo. Se rezon sa a petèt ki fè ti mesye
yo pa t cho menm nan jwèt domino a.

Se konsa, kou bòs Dò parèt, yo tout vire do
kite jwèt la, epi yo fann nan siyay li. Sa ki te pi
cho nan kò tonton an⁵ di konsa: “Bòs Dò o!... 5
Kote ou bare ak gwo tchwe lanp sa a?...⁶ Genlè
ou frèt aswè a?”

Yo pa menm bay tonton an tan pou l
rekonèt li, pase yon lòt di konsa: “Pa pito ou vin
kraze kèk lodyans ak nou, poko gen moun ki 10
konprann anyen nan veye sa a.”⁷ Gen yon
twazyèm ki te chita jouk byen lwen, li leve kanpe,
epi li di byen fò: “Apa nan veye koukou nou ye,
ou tou konnen se sa chwal fè a pou nou manje!”⁸

Lamenm tout ti mesye yo pete ri ansanm, 15
tankou si yo ta vle pase veye a nan betiz. Lè bòs
Dò tande koze a, sa fè l lapenn anpil. Li vin gen
yon kè sere ki pran l, pou l wè jan y ap pase veye
tonton Liben anba betiz. Lè sa a, li pran yon men
l mete bò machwè l, epi l di: “Jenn gason alèkile 20
pa konn bay bouch yo manje non!...”⁹ Yo pale koze
yo pa konnen. Se timoun ayè maten¹⁰ nou ye, nou
pa ka konn ki moun tonton Liben te ye.”

Menm lè a gen youn ladan yo ki di konsa:
“Sa ou ap di la a, bòs Dò!... Piga ou vin pale koze 25
jenn gason menm.”¹¹ Sa se vye koze. Depi papa

**Dòk, tout moun gen libète, ou gen dwa pale lib.¹²
Si yon veye pa bon, ou di l pa bon.”**

Depi anvan lapli a, te gen yon ti granmoun fanm ki te vin bay konkou nan veye a. Tèt li te mare byen sere ak yon mouchwa foula wouj. Li te gen yon karako zefi anwo l. Nan kouti arebò karako a, te gen yon gwo pòch, se la granmoun lan te mete tout ti bagay li te bezwen sou lanmen tankou kachimbo, tabak mannòk, alimèt. Depi granmoun lan te tande jenn gason yo konmanse tizonnen bòs Dò, li te vin akoupi nan pye yon poto tonnèl la, li te limen kachimbo l, epi li t ap fè de rale pou konbat ak fredri a.

Lè l tande ti mesye yo di: “Si yon veye pa bon, se pou ou di l pa bon,” lè sa a granmoun lan leve kanpe, li retire pip la nan bouch li, epi l di konsa: “Bòs Dò o!... Ou kite bann ti baboujèt sa yo ap pase ou nan betiz? Manyè di yo non, ki moun tonton Liben te ye.”

¹Proverb: “When you see a bone on the main road, know that it had flesh on it;” i.e., that it too was once a living being.

²The funeral wake is an important ceremony in Haiti, with singing, drinking, game-playing and storytelling going on all night. The dead person must be amused and his soul sent away in good humor.

³**se mouri kite** “it was to die to leave [it];” i.e., it would last until your dying day.

⁴**lanp tèt gridap** small oil lamp made from a tin can, and without a glass chimney, very common in areas without electricity. (See drawing at beginning of this Chapter.)

⁵**Sa k te... tonton an** “The one who was giving the old man the hardest time”

⁶**Kote ou bare ak gwo tchwe lanp sa a?** “Where are you heading with that old jacket ten sizes too big for you?” (Literally, so large that it puts out lamps as one goes past.)

⁷**Pa pito... nan veye sa a** “How about coming over and chewing the fat with us, there’s not yet anyone who understands anything about this wake.”

⁸**Apa nan veye... pou nou manje!** “Aren’t we at an owl’s [considered in Haiti to be a dung-eating bird] wake; you know right away it’s what a horse drops that we’ll have to eat!” (This is a parody on the well-known proverb: “**Si ou vle ale nan manje koukou, fò ou manje kaka chwal.**” If you want to go to a feast held by [shit-eating] owls, you’ll have to eat horse shit.)

⁹**pa konn... manje non!** “don’t know how to hold their tongues!” (Literally, don’t even know how to feed themselves.)

¹⁰**Se timoun ayè maten** “Children born just yesterday”

¹¹**Piga ou... menm.** “Don’t try to throw our age at us.”

¹²**papa Dòk** familiar name for Dr. François Duvalier (1907-71), president of Haiti from 1957 until his death.

The preceding Note was the only one we could give under the Duvalier regime in the 1982 edition of this text. However, with the departure 7 February 1986 of “Papa Doc”’s son and successor, “Baby Doc” (Jean-Claude Duvalier), we are now free to point out the blatant – and daring – irony involved here. Probably during no other period of Haitian history was freedom of speech more curtailed, or more dangerous, than under the Duvaliers.

Chapit 2 - Yon Gwo Jenn Ti Gason



Adye o!... Pwovèb la gen rezon di: “Mapou tonbe, kabrit manje fèy li!”

“Lè tonton Liben te kaporal Liberis Liben, ou kwè ti zagribay tankou nou ta kapab ap pase l nan betiz? Se moun ki te grannèg depi sou papa manman l wi. Se sikonstans lavi ki fè l vin nan

sitirasyon nou te wè l la. Men te gen yon lè, nèg sa a pa t kanmarad nou youn² ki chita anba tonnèl la.”

Lè ti mesye yo tandè sa, yo tout netwaye gòj yo ansanm, epi yo pwoche pi pre bòs Dò. Sa k te pi cho a di konsa: “Bon, bòs Dò, pou jan ou di granmoun lan te anfòm lan!³ Kouman fè se anba mapou a li te vin chita ap fè trimay li?”

Lè sa a bòs Dò ranje kò l kote l te chita a, li pase yon men l nan bab li, epi li konmanse rakonte istwa tonton Liben:

Liben nou tout te konnen an, se pa van pouse dlo mennen non,⁴ se moun natif natal sou bitasyon Wobyon⁵ wi. Kote nou wè yo vin bati gwo lekòl la, se la wi lakou granpapa l te ye. Se te yon gwo abitan ki te konn fè anpil danre nan jaden l. Lè ou tandè rekòt mayi, tout devan pòt la te chaje ak lyann mayi. Nèg sa a te gen yon sèl pitit fi yo te rele Anemiz, se li menm ki te manman Liben. Se yon nègès ki te bwòdè anpil. Li te konn pale franse. Se Senmak li te lekòl. Konsa, lè l tounen vin andeyò a, tout gason te pè pale avè l. Se sa k fè madmwazèl la rete la ap gaspiye.

Kako vin anvayi Latibonit pou ale mete Tonton Nò prezidan. Lè sa a, jeneral Tirezyas t ap chache fèmèn yo nan Senmak. Se konsa yon

pati nan lame Pòtoprens la te vin kantonnen Wobyon.⁶ Se yon jenn kòmandan yo te rele Kanmnè ki te fè chèf lame sa a.

Depi Kanmnè debake nan Wobyon, li pa wè li pa tandè pase l fann nan siyay Anemiz.⁷ Chak apremidi, nèg la mete tout zepolèt li ansanm ak tout nepe l. Li klere soulye l byen klere, epi l vin chita ap pale franse anba galeri konmè a.⁸ 5

Rale mennen kase,⁹ Anemiz pran yon gwòs pou kòmandan an. Tan pou fanmi konmè a rekonèt sa, lame a te deja deplase ak tout kòmandan l. Se konsa Liben pa janm rekonèt papa l. 10

Lè pitit la te fèk fèt, se pa ti kras malad li te malad. Te gen yon lè menm Anemiz te kwè li t ap pèdi l. Men ak Bondye li bat jouk tan l vin chape l. Lè malè a te fèk rive, tout fanmi Anemiz yo te move sou li. Men apre pitit la te fin fèt, yo tout te byen kontan. Kanta pou papa l menm, li pa t wè li pa t tandè pase se Liben.¹⁰ Nou konnen li te toujou anvi gen yon pitit gason. Se pou rezon sa a li te renmen pitit la anpil. Li te toujou ap di se pitit sa a ki tèt sèkèy li.¹¹ 15 20

Nou konnen andeyò yo pa voye timoun lekòl bonè. Se sa k fè Liben te deja yon gwo jenn ti gason ki t ap kouri nan tout raje a, lè yo fè lide 25

mete l lekòl. Men nan tan sa a, pa t gen lekòl nan Wobyon non. Se jouk Senmak yo te fè lide pou mete l, menm kote manman l te ye a. Se poutèt sa tou yo pa t twò prese, paske depi timoun andeyò vin lavil, se li menm ki pou reskonsab tèt li.

Tout bagay te fin pare nèt pou Liben te desann Senmak nan mwa janvyè. Yon senmenn apre yo fin fete Lewa, jou dimanch lavèy pou Liben desann lavil la, konsa revolisyon Fimen pete nan Gonayiv.¹² Lè sa a, Latibonit tèt anba. Anpil moun Senmak moute vin kache nan Wobyon. Se konsa plan pou voye Liben lavil la gate. Lè Anemiz wè se toutbon pitit la ap rete sòt nan raje a, li degaje l yon lòt jan.

Sou yon lòt bitasyon yo rele Gouyavye, te gen yon bòs kòdonnye ki te konn bay timoun leson. Men pou sòti Wobyon ale Gouyavye, se bagay ki pran prèske de (2) zèdtan. Men sa ou vle malerèz la fè, li pa kapab kite pitit la rete konsa. Kifè, chak maten yo voye yon moun sou bourik mennen Liben lekòl jouk Gouyavye. Moun lan te blije tann pitit la fin pran leson an pou l mennen l tounen nan apremidi.

Se vre, Anemiz te dwe kapab bay pitit la ti leson. Men ou konnen, pou dat li te sòti nan sètifika, li te vin yon ti jan wouye.

¹"The ceiba tree having fallen, a goat eats its leaves!" Once the powerful and mighty have fallen, even the lowest being shows no respect.

The following three paragraphs set the stage for the traditional Haitian storytelling session created by the first Chapter.

²**pa t kanmarad nou youn** "wouldn't be down on a level with any of you."

³**lan** modifies **jan**; see Grammar Reminders 1 and 2d.

⁴**se pa van... non** "he was not [someone] the wind blew in, [or] the waves washed up;" i.e., he was not just some nobody.

⁵**Wobyon** small locality near Saint-Marc. See Map.

⁶Pierre Nord Alexis, affectionately dubbed "**Tonton Nò**" by the masses, was 83 at this time (1902). His irregular troops, or Cacos, would succeed in driving the government forces of former President Tirésias Simon Sam ("**jeneral Tirezyas**") out of Port-au-Prince. "**Tonton Nò**" then became president December 1902 - December 1908.

⁷**li pa tande... Anemiz** "his only thought was the pursuit of Anemiz."

⁸Note here and on page 8, lines 20-23, the snobbish role of French in rural Haiti.

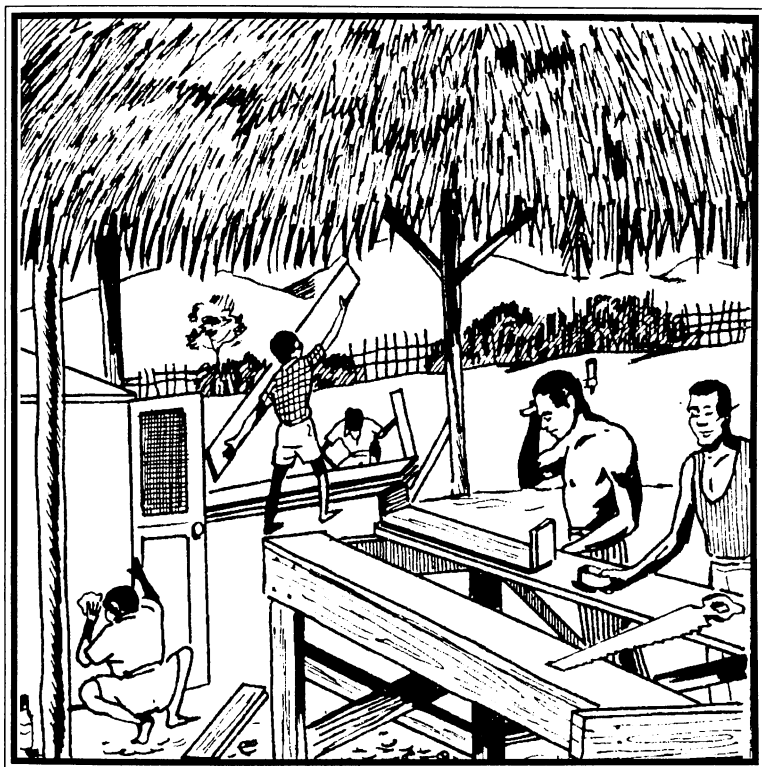
⁹**Rale mennen kase** "Pulling leads to breaking;" i.e., one thing leading to another.

¹⁰**Kanta pou... se Liben** "As for her father himself, he could neither see nor hear of anything except Liben;" i.e., he was completely taken by the child.

¹¹**ki tèt sèkèy li** "who [would be at the] head of his coffin;" i.e., in whom he could have complete confidence.

¹²15 January 1908, Anténor Firmin began an ill-fated uprising in Gonaïves which quickly reached Saint-Marc as well as much of the North.

Chapit 3 - Ki Metye?



Mezanmi, gen moun ki pa gen chans nan lavi a. Nou kapab lote Anemiz ak kalite moun konsa. Depi zafè l te fin pase mal, se papa l ki te tout pou li. Men se tonton an tou ki sèvi papa pou Liben, pitit Anemiz la.

5

Men kon pawòl la di, ou pa mare pye lanmò.¹ Tonton an leve yon jou maten, li pati ale

wè yon jaden l te gen nan basrak la. Rive l rive, li gen yon toudisman ki pran l ak yon vantfèmal. Lè moun ki te vin ba l konkou yo wè jan l pa byen, yo bouyi yon te ba l bwè. Lè l fèk bwè te a, li fè yon ti kabicha. Men apre yon ti kadè, kolik la vin pi rèd. Lè sa a, moun yo nan katye a sanble, yo fè yon branka, yo mete tonton an anwo l, epi yo tou mennen l vin bay Anemiz. Rive la, pitit fi a fè sa l te kapab pou bay papa a lavi. Tou sa l fè, kolik la pa janm pase. Yo voye rele manbo vin wè sa l genyen. Lè fanm lan vini, li fè basinen anba tivant li ak enpe lwil masketi. Ou ap betize, kolik la pi rèd. Se konsa malere a fè lannwit la ap soufri. Kou devan jou ap parèt, li ale bwa chat.²

Koze sa a te fè yon bann pale anpil. Gen moun ki di se pran yo pran granmoun lan. Gen lòt menm ki fè konnen se fanmi ki ba l pwazon pou tè.³ Men nan tout pale anpil sa a, se Anemiz ak Liben ki te nan bouyay.

Wi se vre, Anemiz te nan ka. Ou konnen ak koze li te ale etidye Senmak la, papa l pa t janm kite l fè gwo travay. Konsa se yon nègès ki te mare anpil. Se tankou si de (2) pye l yo te nan yon sèl soulye. Li te toujou wè papa a ap antre danre sòti nan jaden, men l pa t janm konnen ki kote jaden yo te ye. Se konsa, kou dènye priyè tonton an fin fèt, fanmi Anemiz yo fè l pwosè, yo pran tout tè yo nan men l.

Liben menm kontinye ap grandi nan raje a. Li te fè anpil pwogrè nan leson yo. Kòm li te fin gran timoun, se pou kont li, li te konn ale pran leson.

Lè Anemiz egzaminen sitirasyon an byen, li vin konprann si Liben pa chache aprann yon metye, sa p ap bon pou li. Se vre wi, depi yon moun pa gen tè pou travay andeyò, vin wè ou pa gen metye, se vakabon wi ou ap tounen. Se konsa Anemiz ranje kò l yon jan, li tou mete Liben nan aprann tayè. Konsa li di lè jennonm lan a fin pare, l a degaje l achte yon machin a koud pou li. 5 10

Nan tan sa a, peyi a te nan yon pakèt boulvès. Se tanzantan kako te pran lèzam pou ranvèse gouvènman. Moun yo andeyò a pa t menm gen tan pou yo aprann non prezidan yo. Kou ou ap seye konprann jan pou ou di non yon prezidan, konsa ou tande se yon lòt moun ki nan plas la. 15 4

Se konsa, yon jou moun ki te desann fè mache Senmak tounen ak yon gwo nouvèl. Pawòl la te sitèlman gwo, se anba chal yo te pale l. O wi, yo di konsa blan pran peyi a. Gen anpil moun ki te pè repete koze a. Men kòm tout bagay te vin rantre nan lòd, tout moun te kontinye ap viv jan yo te kapab. 20 25 5

Se konsa Anemiz te vin louvri yon kòmès vyann kochon pou l te kapab kenbe ak pitit la. Liben menm pou kont pa l te kontinye ap aprann metye tayè a.

Pandan tout bagay t ap mache, konsa yon jou gen yon lòt nouvèl ki vin parèt. Yo di blan yo nonmen yon nouvo prezidan ki pa la pou lontan. Se li menm prezidan sa a ki pral fè eleksyon pou nonmen yon bon prezidan.⁶ Lè sa a, yo fè konnen blan yo t ap chache jenn gason solid pou òganize lame peyi a.⁷

Se konsa yon jou maten, pandan Liben nan atelye a, li tande gwo bòs la ap pale ak yon lòt zanmi. Lè sa a li tande bòs la di konsa: “Se donmaj m fin granmoun, si m te jenn tankou ti mesye sa yo, m ta rantre nan lame a. Lè m ta fin mare yon bon kraze, se lè sa a m ta kite pou m vin moute yon kòmès.”

Depi jou sa a, Liben gen yon sèl lide nan tèt li: rantre nan lame pou l mare yon sitirasyon. Men li te pè di manman l koze a.

¹Proverb: “You don’t tie the feet of death;” i.e., there’s no stopping death.

²li ale bwa chat “he went to cat woods,” i.e., he died.

³In rural Haiti, where doctors are scarce, sudden death is often blamed either upon the supernatural (yo here, “the spirits”), or upon malicious intent (here, poisoning in order to acquire his land).

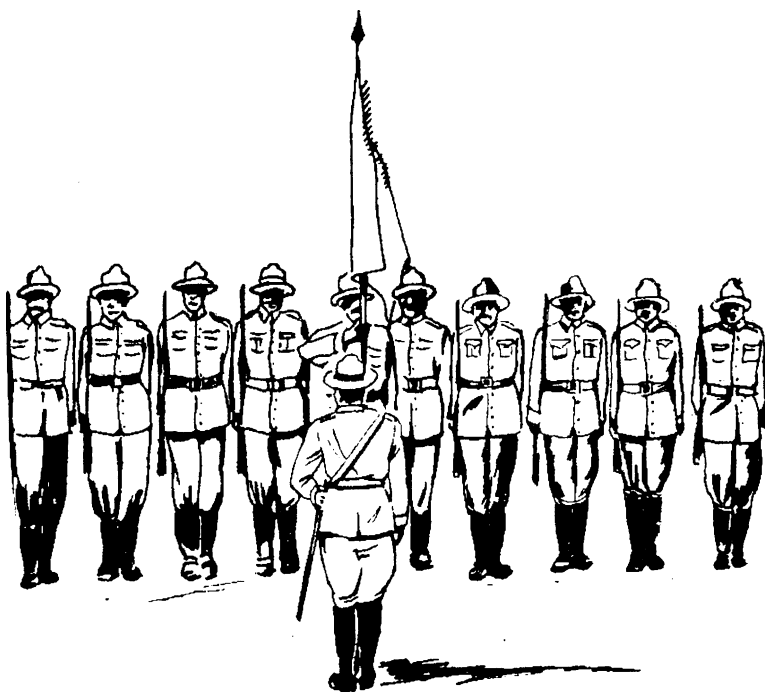
⁴A Haitian observer of the period, Antoine Pierre-Paul, wrote: “The Cacos [**kako**: irregular, or guerrilla, troops from Northern Haiti] made a veritable industry out of insurrection and guerrilla war, creating and demolishing government after ephemeral government: government of nine months, of five months, and even of three months. The vandalism they made reign throughout our towns and countryside provided the pretext for the Yankee imperialists of 1915.” (Quoted in Robert Heinl, *Written in Blood*, ed. 1978, p. 431.) Between 1908 and July 1915 Haiti had no less than eight different presidents.

⁵28 July 1915, a force of 330 United States Marines landed near Port-au-Prince, under orders from President Woodrow Wilson (“the great defender of the rights of small nations”!). By September martial law was in effect, with small Marine garrisons stationed in the ten major towns of Haiti, including Saint-Marc. The Occupation was to go on for slightly more than nineteen years (1915-1934), longer by far than in any other country.

⁶Such was the mistaken impression at the time concerning Dr. Rosalvo Bobo, self-proclaimed president of Haiti. Sudre Dartiguenave was the president “elected” by the National Assembly 12 August 1915, serving a regular seven-year term of office.

⁷The ill-paid, ill-trained army of 9,000 was replaced by the Gendarmerie d’Haïti, a carefully chosen, trained force of 2,500, neatly uniformed and decently paid.

Chapit 4 - Jandam!



Anemiz se pa t yon moun ki te ale lavil twò souvan. Nou konn kòmès vyann kochon pa gen anyen pou l wè ak magazen lavil. Se sèlman lè fèt ap rive, ki te fè l bezwen lavil.

Anemiz te gen yon kote li te konn achte kredi. Se depi sou tan papa l, moun sa yo te fè pratik avè l. Kòm mèt magazen an te konnen l depi l te tikatkat, li pa t janm refize l anyen. Men fò ou di tou, Anemiz te toujou respekte tèt li. Li

5

pa janm kite twa (3) mwa pase san yo pa wè je l. Lè konsa, li desann, li peye sa l te dwe, epi l fè yon lòt ti kredi. Epitou, li pa ta kapab bliye dat regleman magazen an, paske se dat Liben te pi renmen: se lè sa a, manman te pwofite mennen l fè yon ti tou lavil la. Lè konsa, yo desann depi nan vandredi swa, ansanm ak lòt abitan k ap vin vann danre. Yo dòmi, epi nan samdi matin yo ale byen bonè fè pwovizyon nan magazen. Konsa, depi mache gaye, yo tou derape tounen lakay yo.

Jou vandredi sa a, yo te kite Wobyon pi bonè pase tout lè, paske yo te pè pou lapli pa t pran yo nan wout. Sa fè tou, yo te rive byen bonè lavil la.

Se pa t apye non yo te fè wout la. Anemiz te gen yon gwo poulen chwal ki te konn sèvi l pou l ale fè mache sou lòt bitasyon yo. Se sou chwal sa a yo te konn ale lavil. Lontan, lè Liben te timoun, yo te konn moute ansanm sou chwal la. Men depi Liben te fin jenn gason, se li menm ki te konn moute sou bèt sa a. Lè sa a Anemiz menm te konn mache dèyè.¹

Lè yo rive nan lari kay kote yo te konn fè ladesant la, yo tou sezi wè yon bann moun gonfle sou de (2) bò lari a ap gade jandam ki t ap fè egzèsis nan lari a. Te gen yon gwo blan nan mitan lari a. Li t ap mache pa bak, epi toutan l ap

mache, l ap plede konte an angle: “Wann, tou,
 tri, fòr!... Wann, tou, tri, fòr!”² Jandam yo menm
 te gen fizi sou zepòl yo. Chapo nan tèt yo menm
 te gen menm fòm ak yon bouda po kokoye. Janm
 yo menm te vlope ak yon bagay tankou si ou ta di
 moso tach palmis.³ Figi yo menm byen serye ap
 swe tankou pitit Bouki anba solèy midi a.⁴

5

Kou Liben wè jandam yo nan lari a,
 lamenm li chonje pawòl bès la t ap pale nan atelye
 a. Wi, li chonje lè bès la t ap di, si l te jenn gason,
 se nan jandam li ta renmen rantre. Lè sa a, Liben
 sitèlman pèdi nan egzèsis jandam yo, se Anemiz
 ki blije pran kòd zannimo a, pou jennonm lan pa
 ale moute sou moun yo ki te sanble bò lari a.

10

Rive Anemiz rive, li pase nan pòtay la, li
 rantre nan lakou a. Li desele bèt la epi l pran zèb
 li te pote pou li, li ale mare bèt la anba pye siwèl
 la. Apre sa, li mete zèb la devan l pou l manje. Lè
 fini, li pran pwovizyon li te pote pou moun yo, li
 mete yo anba tonnèl ki devan kizin lan.

15

20

Se pa t yon gwo pwovizyon non, se te de (2)
 bèl jouwoumou ak twa (3) lo militon. Men pandan
 tout travay sa a, Liben pa janm parèt tèt li, se
 Anemiz ki fè tout bagay pou kont li. Nèg la menm
 rete kanpe devan galeri a ap gade blan an fè
 jandam yo fè egzèsis anba solèy la.

25

Nan aswè, Anemiz te kwit yon gwo bonm bouyon. Li te mete tout bon bagay ladan l. Te gen fèy boujon militon, malanga, bannann, vyann kochon sale, doumbrèy. Anemiz drese yon bòl bouyon nan yon kwi, epi yo toude chita anwo makout chwal la, y ap manje.

Pandan yo rete konsa, Anemiz di Liben: “Liben o!... Ala gade ou gade jandam yo, genlè ou pa pè yo?... Se moun ki frajil wi, jandam. Mwen m pa janm fye moun sa yo!”

Lè Liben tande sa, li reponn: “M pa wè poukisa pou m ta pè yo, apa moun yo ye. Epitou, ou pa janm konnen si yon jou se pa jandam m ap ye.”

Se pa ti sezi Anemiz sezi lè l tande Liben di kalite gwo koze sa a. Lamenm li poze kwi bouyon an atè, epi l di: “Gade, Liben, piga ou vin chaje tèt ou ak kalite gwo lide kon sa non. Malerèz tankou m, kote ou ta vle m pase pou m mete ou nan jandam!”

Bon, Liben pa di anyen, paske koze a rete la. Men malere a pase nwit la san l pa fèmen je l. Sèlman, vè twa (3) zè, li fè yon ti kabicha, epi lamenm li fè yon rèv. Li reve l abiye an jandam, epi blan an ap fè l fè egzèsis. Men figi blan an pa t mare menm.

Jou samdi sa a, pa t gen anpil moun nan boutik kote Anemiz te konn achte a. Sa k te fè mèt boutik la pi kontan wè yo, se paske Anemiz te pote tout kòb li te dwe, san l pa t kite rès dèyè. Lè nèg la fin ranje tout kòb li, li di Anemiz konsa: 5
“M renmen sèvi ak moun serye tankou ou. Se pou rezon sa a m pa gen dwa refize vann ou anyen nan boutik la. Bon!... Apa m wè ti nonm ou a fin gwo nèg nèt! Sa ou gen lide fè ak li nan raje a?”

Lè sa a, figi Anemiz vin longè yon manchèt koulin, epi l reponn: “Adye, mesye!... Pitit la fin gate nan men m wi... M te mete l nan tayè, men jòdi a m tande se jandam li vle fè!” 10

Lè sa a, mèt boutik la fwote de (2) men l yo ansanm, epi l di: “Men, sa se pa yon move lide!... Kalite jenn gason sa a, li ta fè yon bon jandam. Ou konnen se nan men blan ameriken bagay la ye, yo peye byen. Si l ta rantre, sa ta penmèt li mare yon ke kòb. Konsa li ta kapab reprann pozisyon granpapa l.” 15 20

Lè Anemiz pran son koze a byen, li mete yon men nan machwè l, epi l reponn: “Bon, malerèz tankou m, kote m ta ka pretann mete pitit nan lame?”

Mèt boutik la pa menm ba l tan fin fèmen bouch li, pase l di konsa: “Sa ou ap di la a!... Depi ou ta vle fè l antre, se bagay m ap fè toptop. Chèf la se zanmi m, se chak swa nou ansanm.”

Lè Anemiz tande koze sa a, li pe koup. Li gen yon sèl kè sere ki pran l. Lamenm li vire pawòl la. Li pran lonn ki te poze sou kontwa a, li konmanse pike kèk twal li ta renmen, epi l di konsa: “Jòdi a m p ap achte anpil non. M gen kèk moun ki manke m pawòl nan regleman m sot fè a.”

Pandan manman an ap okipe achte nan men mèt boutik la, Liben menm te ozanj. Pou kalite bèl pawòl li te sot tande la a, li te deja ap kalkile kilè pou l antre nan Gad la.

¹Paradoxically, now that Liben has become old enough to walk by himself, he instead rides the horse, while his mother follows behind on foot. With details such as this, Carrié Paultre is constantly illustrating Haitian peasant customs.

²The Haitian gendarmes were drilled by the Marines in English, following the Marine drill manual.

³An eloquent example of how the author expresses reality through the eyes of the Haitian peasant, using as points of reference only those objects familiar to his experience.

⁴Bouki and Ti Malis are the two best-known characters in Haitian folklore, with Bouki almost invariably duped by Ti Malis.

Chapit 5 - Yon Bèl Bèl Ti Madmwazèl



Jou samdi apremidi sa a, Liben te fèk leve pòs devan bayè prizon an. Rive l te rive nan kazèn lan, li te ale nan sal gad la fè rapò l epi pou l te depoze fizi a. Pandan l kanpe devan kaporal degad la, konsa l wè youn nan jenn rekri ki te rantre ansanm avè l yo, parèt nan pòt la epi l di: “Sòlda Liberis Liben!... Premye sèjan an ap mande pou ou.”

5

Menm lè a, Liben prese fin fè rapò a, epi l kouri ale jwenn sèjan fourye a. Kou l rive, li mete l ogadavou epi l fè sali militè. Lè sa a, sèjan an te chita dèyè yon machin a ekri, li t ap tape lèt. Lè l wè Liben, li pran yon lèt ki te nan tiwa biwo a, li lonje l, epi l di: “Se ou menm yo rele Liberis Liben? Men yon mesaj kòmandan an kite pou ou!... Ou mèt tou pare zafè ou. Lannwit la gen yon misyonè k ap pase ale Okap, ou a vwayaje avè l!... Wonpe!”

Lamenm, Liben pran lèt la nan men sèjan an, li fè voltefas, epi l ale tou dwat nan dòtwa a. Rive la, li chita sou rebò kabann lan, li louvri anvlòp la pou l te ka konprann sa premye sèjan an te vle di, lè l te di: “Ou a vwayaje avè l pou ale Okap!”

Wi, kou l li lèt la, li konprann tout bagay. Yo te transfere l sòti nan diznevyèm konpayi Senmak, yo te voye l jouk nan Nò, yon kote ki rele Otwou. Konsa, li patko menm fin gen sis (6) mwa depi l te nan Gad la, li blije ap kite vye manman l pou l ale jouk nan peyi pèdi sa a. Se pa ti sere kè l te sere. Se sa k fè li rete yon bon ti moman chita ak lèt la kenbe nan men l. Se yon lòt zanmi ki te kouche sou yon kabann tou pre a ki di l konsa: “Bò isit, pitit mwen, sansib pa jwe non!...¹ Se sere dan ou pou antre nan michan!”

Menm lè a, Liben leve, l ale lakay moun yo kote manman l te konn fè ladesant la, li kite nouvèl pou yo voye Wobyon. Apre sa, li pase wè kèk zanmi kote l te konn jwe kat, epi l tounen vin pare zafè l pou l tann okazyon ki te gen pou pase a.

5

* * *

Li pa kapab di konben tan l te fè sou wout, paske depi l moute chita nan kamyon an, dòmi pran l. Se jouk lè jou ap kase, li tou sezi wè se devan yon pòs chofè a ap pale ak yon faksyonè. Lè sa a, li tandè se Bayè Boutèy² li ye. Li pase jounen an nan kazèn Okap, epi nan menm dimanch apremidi a, li derape pou Otwou.

10

Otwou sa ou tandè a, se yon bon ti kote wi. Jou ou tandè gen mache, se pa ti kras abitan ki desann vin nan bouk la. Lè sa a, depi lavèy, gen dans sou tout arebò mache a.

15

Nan do kazèn lan, gen yon bèl larivyè ki pase la. Se nan larivyè sa a, tout moun nan bouk la te sèvi. Yo lave, yo benyen, yo pran dlo pou lakay.

20

Liben se pa t yon moun ki te janm okipe koze legliz, ni Levanjil. Se Anemiz manman l ki ta pou montre l chemen sa a. Men Anemiz pou tèt pa l pa t janm okipe bagay konsa. Se vre, chak

lanne li te fè netwaye tonm defen yo. Epitou, li te toujou fè yon manje lwa vè sis (6) janvyè.³ Men apre sa, kòm Liben pa t janm malad, li pa t janm mete pase yon ti chemizèt twa paman anwo l.⁴ Konsa, lè Liben te vin lage nan lavi a, li pa t jennen l pou anyen. Li te bat kòk rèd,⁵ li te pran ti gwòd li ale pou vini.⁶ Kanta pou fanm menm, se san gad dèyè li te kraze yo.

Depi l te debake Otwou, li te fè zanmi ak yon jenn rekri ki te gen menm laj avè l. Mesye sa yo te peze kafe yo nan menm balans.⁷

Se konsa, yon jou samdi apremidi, Liben te desann ak zanmi li sou bò larivyè a. Jou sa a kè yo te kontan, yo te vin benyen pou yo te kapab ale nan yon dans ki t ap fèt byen lwen, lakay yon chèf seksyon. Pandan yo te chita bò dlo a ap tann san yo frèt, konsa yo wè yon bèl bèl ti madmwazèl vin ap pase. Gen lè l te sot lave, paske l te gen yon kivèt rad anwo tèt li, epi men l yo te yon ti jan blanch. Se tankou si ou ta di yo te ret tranpe nan dlo a depi lontan. Li te gen yon wòb zefi blaze anwo l. Sou arebò kivèt la, li te foure de (2) grenn sapat li yo. Konsa li t ap mache pye atè sou sab la. Toutan l ap mache, l ap chante yon kantik Levanjil.

Lè l rive tou pre mesye yo, li sispann chante, epi lè l ap pase devan yo, li soutni kivèt la ak men

**I, li vire tèt li ti kras, epi l di: “Bonswa, mesye!”
Lamenm, je l tonbe nan je Liben, epi l bese je l.**

**Lè Liben wè je pitit la, li santi kè l kase.
Depi l t ap kontre fanm, se premye fwa li te wè 5
kalite bèl fanm sa a. Se premye fwa tou li te santi
kalite batman kè sa a. Si yon moun te poze men
anwo lestonmak li, ou ta tandè kè l ap bat tankou
si se pitimi y ap pile ak de (2) manch.**

**Menm lè a, li resezi tèt li, epi l di zanmi an
konsa: “Ala yon bèl ti konmè!... Kote l prale 10
pou l prese konsa?... Pa pito nou rele l vin benyen
ak nou?”**

**Lè zanmi an tandè sa, li sezi, epi lamenn li
pran men l, li bouche bouch Liben pou
madmwazèl la pa tandè, epi l di: “Ou gen lè fou, 15
ou pa konn ki moun sa ye?... Se pitit frè Nondye
wi, se bon moun wi. Ni papa l, ni manman l se
levanjil yo ye wi. Ou pa tandè se yon chan legliz l
ap chante. Ou pa pou betize ak tout moun ou
kontre nan lari non. Si ou vle, denmen dimanch 20
la m ta mennen ou wè kote pitit sa a ap chante
nan legliz kote l sèvi. Men m konnen ou p ap kite
gagè ou pou ale legliz.”**

**Lè sa a, Liben pa reponn anyen, pase l di
zanmi an konsa: “Bon!... Kijan yo rele l?” Lòt 25**

ti gad la souri, epi l reponn: “Gen lè ou tonbe pou pitit moun yo?... Se Selyaniz madmwazèl la rele.”

Epi se konsa Liben wè Selyaniz pou lapremye fwa.

¹**sansib pa jwe non!** “there’s no use feeling sorry for yourself!”

²**Bayè Boutèy** Barrière Bouteille, the three pillars which form the city gate to Cape Haitian.

³January 6, Epiphany or Twelfth-Night in the Christian church, is also an important date for Voodoo. Many consider the feeding of the Voodoo spirits (**lwa**) at this ritual essential to remaining in their favor.

⁴**li pa t... anwo l** he never wore [more] than a little undershirt [usually made] of white, red, and black cloth [to ward off evil, without any other Voodoo charms or amulets].”

⁵**Li te bat kòk rèd** “He was heavy into cock fighting.”

⁶**ale pou vini** “both coming and going,” i.e., continuously.

⁷**Mesye sa yo... menm balans** “These men weighed their coffee with the same scales;” i.e., they were birds of a feather.

Chapit 6 - Yon Bon Maryaj



Se vre Liben pa t ale dèyè Selyaniz ak lide marye nan tèt li. Lè l te fèk wè ti konmè a, li te konprann se te moun konsa konsa.¹ Men, lè l konmanse frekante kay la, li tou sezi wè sa l te kwè a, se pa sa.

5

Se vre, fanmi Selyaniz yo pa t moun ki te mennen gwo lavi. Frè Nondye te gen de (2) pitit fi

ak yon pitit gason. Madanm li se pa t yon moun ki te twò gen lasante. Se toutan li t ap souffri ak doulè rimatis. Se pou rezon sa a, se Selyaniz ki te tout nan kay la. Manje se li menm, mache se li menm, larivyè se li menm.² Fò di tou, se li menm ki te premye pitit, apre sa jennonm lan te swiv li, epi lòt ti madmwazèl la te vin dèyè nèt.

Premye fwa Liben vin nan kay la, li te sezi wè jan moun yo gen bon levasyon. Pou di laverite, li pa t gen lide rantre lakay moun yo non. Sèlman men sa k rive. Kèk jou apre li te fin tande Selyaniz chante nan legliz la, li vin fè rankont avè l sou galeri yon boutik bò mache a. Jou sa a madmwazèl la te byen bwòdè, li te rantre lavil la vin achte twal pou moun li yo.

Konsa se yon ti panyen latanyen ak manch ki te nan men l. Ti panyen an te boure ak tout kalite twal. Se yon ti plas tou piti ki te rete jis kont pou pase dwèt soutni de (2) manch yo. Apre sa, te gen yon lòt pakèt mare ak yon fisèl poze sou bra l. Pandan Selyaniz fin achte, li fè sa pou l desann galeri a, konsa l bare bab pou bab³ ak ti gad ki t ap plede gade l nan legliz la. Sa te fè twazyèm fwa je l te tonbe nan je nèg la. Menm lè a tou kè l konmanse bat.

Lè Liben wè jan madmwazèl la dekontwole, li pwofite fè yon frekan avè l. Li pwoche bò kote l

la, epi l di: “Atansyon pou ou pa tonbe wi nan desann galeri a. Pa pito m pran pakèt la pou ou!”

Lamenm nèg la gentan pran pakèt twal la sou bra pitit la, san l pa ba l tan reponn. Selyaniz menm tèlman sezi, li pa di anyen. Liben menm tou pran pakèt li nan men l, epi l akonpaye madmwazèl la. Lè yo rive devan pòt kay la, Liben te yon ti jan sispèk pou moun yo pa fè l malonèt. Konsa li te fè lide renmèt madmwazèl la pakèt la, epi bwaze. Men pandan y ap mache vini, se konsa tou frè Nondye t ap sòti nan jaden ak yon chay patat anwo yon milèt. Lè sa a Selyaniz di Liben konsa: “Se papa m wi k ap vin ak chay patat la. Rantre non, m a fè ou fè konesans avè l.” 5 10

Wi, se konsa Liben franchi pòtay lakou kay frè Nondye. Men, se pa tout kote ou rive ou kapab fè bak. 15

* * *

Depi Liben t ap frekante moun sa yo, tout bagay te chanje nèt pou li. Li te sispann ale nan gagè, jennès pa t di l anyen ankò, se yon sèl moun ki te konte pou li, se Selyaniz. Li pa t ka viv san fi a. 20

Se konsa nèg la mete lòd nan zafè l, epi l tou marye ak nègès la, san l pa menm voye di 25

manman l anyen. Se jouk byen ta, lè madanm vin ap pote yon pitit, se lè sa a ase li ekri yon lèt voye bay moun li yo nan Wobyon. Rezon ki pa t fè l twò cho di Anemiz koze a, se paske l konnen manman l pa t ap kontan tande l marye ak yon levanjil.

Men pou Liben menm, plis li t ap viv ak madanm li, se plis li te renmen l, sitou lè l te tande lòt gad yo ap pran tèt chaje paske y ap kite kay yo. Se vre wi, yo toujou ap di yo sispèk madanm yo ap mennen lòt gason vin nan kay la. Li menm Liben, li pa t nan pwoblèm sa yo. Li te fè madanm li konfyans. Se vre sa te fè l lapenn kite kay la. Lè yo te konn voye l ale fè pòs jouk Sentsizàn, pou l te fè de (2) twa (3) senmenn san wè Selyaniz, sa te rès anpil. Men malgre sa, li te kè pòpòz, li te konnen se pou l tounen vin jwenn tout bagay kòrèk nèt.

Si Liben pa t cho pou tounen Wobyon, Selyaniz menm pa t konn sa l ta bay pou fè konesans Anemiz. Wi, malgre l pa t konnen bèlmè a, li te santi se yon bon moun. Li te anvi wè ki moun ki te elve kalite bon gason sa a pou li. Se vre wi, Liben te yon bon mari wi pou Selyaniz. Depi yo fin fè pewòl nan kazèn, li pran anvlòp kòb la, li pote l bay madanm li. Se Selyaniz ki te okipe tout bagay, se li menm ki te konnen lè kaporal la te bezwen yon bagay. Me wi!... Liben

te vin moute grad, kalite nèg debyen sa a, tout kòmandan nan lame a te renmen l.

Yon jou dimanch apremidi, kaporal la pa t desèvis. Li te kouche nan yon ranmak anba ti pye siwèl nan lakou a. Selyaniz menm t ap fè twalèt ti pitit gason yo a anba tonnèl la. Lè l fin fè twalèt pitit la nèt, li kenbe pitit la nan bra l, epi l di: “Liben o!... Jòdi a m ap mande ou yon bagay!... Ou di lanne sa a fè twazan depi ou pa wè Anemiz, manman ou. Apa pito nou pwofite vakans la, nou ta mennen Titonton wè grann li?”

Lè Liben pran son koze a byen, li fèmen liv li t ap li a, li leve chita sou ranmak la, li reflechi yon ti moman, epi l di: “Selyaniz machè!... Ou konnen ou gen rezon. Se chak twazan wi nou gen pou renouvle kontra nou nan Gad la. Lanne sa a, kòm ou di, m ta kapab mande yon pèmi pou m ale Wobyon, epi lè m tounen, m ta renouvle kontra m.”

Epi se konsa Liben ranmase madanm li ak ti pitit gason l, epi l tounen Wobyon vin wè Anemiz, manman l.

¹moun konsa konsa “a free and easy woman.”

²An excellent example of the natural eloquence of Carrié Paultré’s style.

³**bab pou bab** “beard for beard;” i.e., face to face (however inappropriate this expression may be when a woman is involved!).

Chapit 7 - Chèf Seksyon



Depi yon mwa anvan dat vwayaj la rive, Liben te degaje l voye nouvèl bay Anemiz. Konsa, tout moun nan Wobyon t ap tann Liben, Selyaniz, epi Titonton. Toutan jou a t ap pwoche, se bat Anemiz ap bat kò l.¹ Li pa t konn sa pou l ta fè ankò. Li te fè repare kay la byen pwòp. Tout

panno yo te blanchi ak lacho. Li te fè rekouvri kay kote l fè manje a.² Kanta pou tonnèl rezen devan pòt la menm, li te fè chanje tout gòl yo nèt. Apre sa, li fè yo taye tout kandelab lantouray yo menm wotè. Konsa depi ou parèt byen lwen, se pou ou kontan wè jan kay la fre.

Pou moun yo pa t gen traka sou wout la, se twa (3) zannimo Anemiz te mennen ale kontre yo lavil la. Konsa lè y ap tounen, Liben te moute anwo chwal ki te gen sèl la. Anemiz te moute ak Titonton anwo gwo milèt li konn al fè mache a. Selyaniz menm te pè zannimo, se sa k fè l te moute manman bourik konpè Dye te prete Anemiz la.³

Se pa ti kras fèt moun Wobyon fè pou resevwa Liben. Kote yo pase, moun sou de (2) bò wout la ap vin di yo bonjou. Sa k te konn Liben te kontan wè l. Men sa k patko konnen l, t ap chache wè kalite bèl gason konmè Anemiz te genyen. Kanta pou Selyaniz menm, m pa bezwen di nou jan l te kontan fè konesans bèlmè l.

Liben te gen yon gwo mwa devan l. Konsa li pa t manke pwofite vakans li. Se chak jou li mennen Selyaniz fè pwomnad yon lòt kote. Lè konsa, yo kite tibebe a ak grann, epi yo pati pou kont yo, swa y al benyen Lasous, osinon y al fè vizit lakay yon zanmi.

Yon jou, yo te ansanm ap benyen Lasous, konsa Selyaniz di mari l: “Liben o!... Ou konnen m ta renmen vin viv isit la!... Se vre wi, m renmen karaktè Anemiz. M pa wè sa k ta fè pou m pa viv avè l. Lòt jou ou pa konn sa l di m? ‘Si nou te vle vin rete avè m, mwen ta kite gwo kay twa (3) pyès la pou nou. Mwen ta bati yon lòt ti kay nan plas kote pak kochon yo.’ ” 5

Lè Liben tande koze a, li rete yon bon ti tan san l pa janm di anyen. Apre sa li di: “Bon, Selyaniz!... Si nou vin isit la, kisa n a fè pou n viv?” 10

Lè sa a, Selyaniz te gen yon pakèt kim savon nan tout figi l. Li panche sou kouran dlo a, li pran enpe dlo, li rense figi l, epi l reponn: “M te pale sou sa ak Anemiz wi.... Ou pa konn sa l di m? Li di m konsa: si ou te vle kite Gad la, men sa l ta fè. Moun pa l ki te ba ou piston pou fè ou rantre nan Gad la, ta kapab fè ou vin chèf seksyon Wobyon. Konsa mwen menm, li ta kapab ede m moute yon kòmès kenkay!” 15 20

Lè Liben pran son koze a byen, li mete yon dwèt arebò machwè l, li souke tèt li, epi l di konsa: “Fanm o!... Ala bèt rizèz!... Nou gentan mare kalite gwo konplo sa a sou do m!... Sa ou di a ta bon wi, men kite m reflechi anvan m reponn ou.” 25

Epi se konsa Liben tounen Wobyon kòm chèf seksyon ansanm ak tout fanmi l.

*** * ***

Yo te deja gen yon bon ti tan depi yo t ap bat nan raje a. Selyaniz te vin gen yon ti fi ak yon lòt ti gason. Sa te fè yo twa (3) pitit. De (2) pi gran timoun yo te deja lekòl. Se ti dènye a ase ki te lakay toujou. Lè sa a, se pa t tankou lè Liben te timoun non. Te gen yon bèl lekòl riral nan Wobyon. Se la tout timoun te lekòl. Se te yon bon kote wi. Timoun yo te aprann fè jaden, gade zannimo anmenmtan y ap etidye lòt bagay nan liv.

Si se pa t⁴ yon briganday ki te pase nan mòn lan, Liben ta kapab rete chèf seksyon pou yon bon ti tan ankò. Men vwala sa k rive:

Te vin gen yon istwa rejete ki te nan tout andeyò a. Depi ou tande bann rejete a pati, li rantre nan tout lakou moun ap chache batri ak wanga pou kraze.⁵ Se konsa bann lan ale rantre nan ounfò yon gwo zotobre lavil la. Yo kraze mezi govi, plat marasa ak boutèy beny yo te kapab jwenn. Lè koze a vin rive nan zòrèy chèf, jeran bitasyon an fè konnen se soukèdlawouze yo menm ki te fè bann lan. Se konsa yo tou kase chèf seksyon an.⁶

¹**se bat... kò l** “Anemiz was going to great efforts.”

²In the Haitian peasant community cooking is not done in the house itself but in the open, or under a special structure as here.

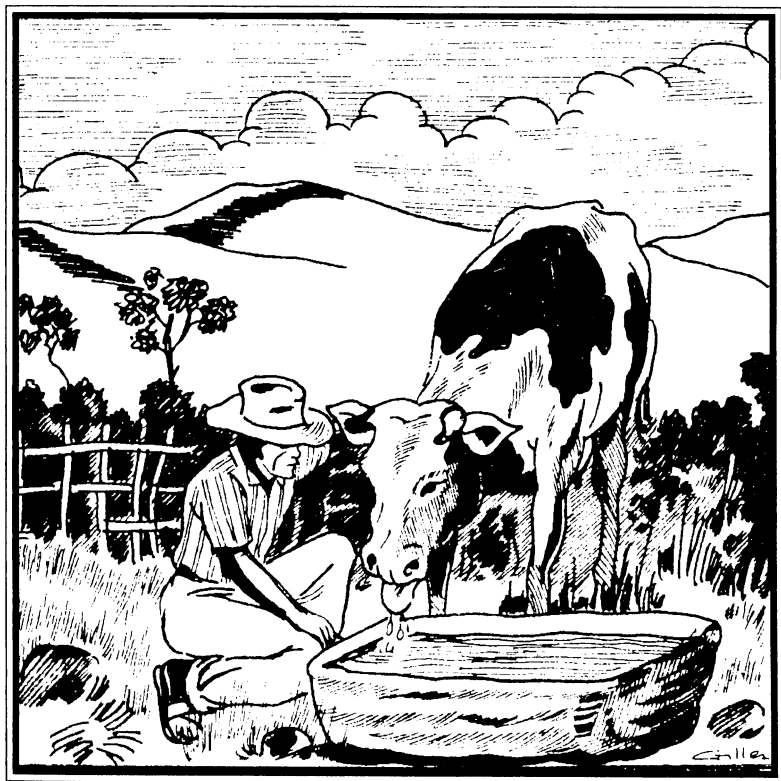
³Note that the drawing for this Chapter does not correspond to the description given here.

⁴**Si se pa t** “If it had not been for.”

⁵Haitian government policy toward Voodoo has varied greatly. In the twentieth century official intolerance was at its most active during the U.S. Occupation (1915-34), and during the presidency of Elie Lescot (1941-46). An especially virulent anti-Voodoo campaign was waged during the summer of 1941, with many temples raided and sacred objects destroyed.

⁶Voodoo temples are privately owned. Consequently the owner of a Voodoo temple in Liben’s district, living in nearby Saint-Marc (**lavil**), is furious when his temple is destroyed, supposedly with the help of Liben’s deputies. Thus he uses his influence to have Liben fired.

Chapit 8 - Kòmès ak Travay Jaden



Bagay ki pi rèd ki kapab rive yon moun, se
lè l te gen yon ti kòb ap rantre chak mwa lakay,
epi ti kòb vin disparèt. Kanta pou sa, se vre wi!
Lè yo te fèk kase Liben nan travay chèf seksyon
an, sa te yon ti jan deranje anpil bagay. Men
Bondye fè l te gen de (2) bon moun pou l te apiye.

5

Sou yon bò te gen Selyaniz, madanm li. Sou lòt bò a te gen Anemiz, manman l. Medam sa yo te viv tankou manman ak pitit. Se vre yo te rete nan menm lakou, men yo chak te gen kay pa yo, yo chak te gen kòmès pa yo. Anemiz te vann vyann kochon sale. Selyaniz menm te fè Liben bati yon fou nan lakou a. Konsa li te fè biswit pou vann, epi l te detaye lòt ti kenkay: savon, rapadou, gaz pou limen lanp, alimèt.

Lè sezon rekòt rive, li te konn gen bèl mouchwa madras, chemizèt pou granmoun. Konsa toutlasentjounen te gen moun ap rantre sòti nan lakou a. Se sa k fè tou, jou grann pa la, Selyaniz mennen toude kòmès yo. Jou se li menm ki pa la, grann mennen toude. Chak lajan toujou apa: lajan vyann, lajan pen, lajan gaz. Chak lajan te nan yon ti bwat apa. Sa penmèt bon regleman fè bon zanmi.

Lè medam yo ap travay konsa, piga nou kwè Liben menm chita nan yon kwen ap grate santi¹ non. Se nèg ki bat kò l anpil.² Depi ou tandè pipirit chante,³ nèg la kite kabann. Li toujou gen de (2) twa (3) bèf pou l tire, epi pou l voye lèt vann lavil. Gen yon kalite abitan ki jwenn mwatye boutèy wonm lè yo tire yon bèf. Liben menm pa t nan sa. Pi piti pou yon bèf ba li, se sis (6) sèt (7) boutèy lèt. Men tou li te bay tèt li traka

pou sa. Malgre dlo a te yon ti jan lwen, se twa (3) fwa pa jou li te fè zannimo yo bwè.

Men se pa travay sa a ase Liben te fè. Se nèg ki pa t menaje kò l nan travay jaden. Malgre li pa t gen tè, li te toujou achte pretansyon⁴ nan men moun nan vwazinay la. Gen de lanne menm, se jouk byen lwen li te blije ale travay jaden, paske se kote sa yo li te jwenn tè, swa se Gouyavye, Fonbatis osinon Kounòl. Lè sa yo, se jouk solèy kouche li te konn tounen lakay. 5 10

Se pa sa sèlman, Liben te fè depo danre tou. Lè rekòt mayi, li te konn achte mayi a pa makòn. Li fè yo cheche nan solèy, epi l mete yo ak mayi jaden l, li kwoke yo nan lyann pou tann avril, me, jen. 15

Konsa, se vre moun yo pa t rich, men kay la pa t janm manke anyen. Kanta pou timoun yo menm, yo te jwenn tou sa yo bezwen. Apre yo te fin pran sètifika nan lekòl andeyò a, yo te mete yo lekòl lavil. Pi gran ti gason an te deja ap fè katriyèm nan lise Vensan.⁵ Ti fi a menm t ap fè premye lanne brevè nan lekòl Endistriyèl.⁶ Se dènye ti gason an ase ki te kontinye ap ale nan lekòl Wobyon an. 20

Pou di laverite, tout moun nan kay la te yon ti jan egare devan timoun yo. Ni grann, ni 25

manman, ni papa, yo te fè timoun yo kwè se lekòl ki tout. Konsa timoun yo yon ti jan meprize tout travay k ap fèt nan kay la. Nan lide pa yo, yo te vin kwè se moun sòt ki travay ak men yo. Lè yo te sòti lavil vin fè vakans andeyò a, yo te yon ti jan kwè yo siperyè tout moun, paske yo save.

Pou jan timoun yo te pase yon bon fèt Nwèl andeyò a, yo pa ta janm konprann lanne k ap vini an t ap mennen kalite deblozay sa a. Se vre, jou sèt (7) janvyè sa a, tout lekòl te louvri byen pwòp. Dènye timoun te kontan pou rakonte jan yo te pase vakans. Men depi nan apremidi, dènye pwofesè sispann fè klas, yo tout rasanble ansanm ap rakonte yon nouvèl ki di: “Bagay gate Pòtoprens!”

Se vre wi, dènye lekòl te fèmen nan Pòtoprens. Se sa k fè nan denmen maten vè dizè, vin gen yon gwo kouri fèt nan mache a. Se pa ti bat jandam bat abitan jou sa a. Sa ou tandè a, dènye lekòl fèmen pòt, tout pwofesè, tout elèv ale lakay yo.⁷

Lè Liben pran nouvèl bagay pa bon lavil la, li fè yon desann vin wè kijan timoun yo ye. Lè l rive, li tandè gouvènman tonbe, lame pran pouvwa. Lè sa a, li pa fè ni de ni twa,⁸ pase l pran tout timoun tounen andeyò.

¹**ap grate santi** “scratching [one’s armpits] and smelling [one’s fingers];” i.e., doing nothing useful.

²**Se nèg... anpil** Cf. Chapter 7, Note 1.

³**Depi ou tande pipirit chante** “Since [the moment] you hear the kingbird sing;” i.e., at the crack of dawn. The **pipirit** family has six varieties of birds found in Haiti, of which the most common is the **pipirit gri**, or gray kingbird. This is a very frequent expression in what is often called an “early morning country.” Haitians arise very early, when it is still cool, and go to bed early, where especially in the rural areas electricity is essentially non-existent.

⁴**li te toujou achte pretansyon** “he always leased farmland.”

⁵**katriyèm nan lise Vensan** ninth grade. The beginning class in the Haitian school system is the 12th grade and progresses to 1st grade, just the opposite of the U.S. system. Thus **katriyèm lise**, the Haitian 4th grade, would correspond to the U.S. 9th grade (i.e., high-school freshman class). Lycée de Garçons Sténio Vincent (president of Haiti 1930-41), is a high school founded in Saint-Marc in 1934.

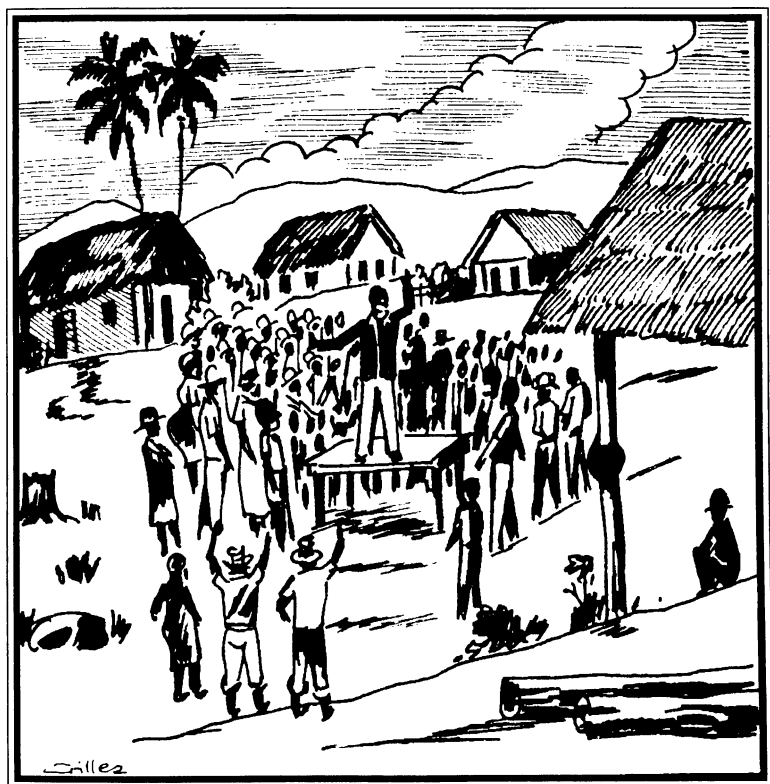
⁶**lekòl Endistriyèl** a domestic arts school formerly in Saint-Marc.

⁷7-11 January 1946, what began as a student revolt in Port-au-Prince quickly spread and brought down the regime of Elie Lescot, president since May 1941.

Note how the author has skillfully avoided situating events in terms of dates, but instead has followed the Haitian peasants’ perception of time as defined by political regimes and natural disasters.

⁸**li pa fè ni de ni twa** “he did neither two nor three;” i.e., he did not hesitate for a moment.

Chapit 9 - Menm Antwàn nan Gonmye...



Lanne ou tande militè te pran peyi a sou kouran mwa janvyè a, se pa ti kras deblozay ki te genyen. Lè sa a nou fè sèt (7) mwa san nou pa gen chèf.¹ Nan tan sa a, se depite yo ki te konn nonmen prezidan an.² Ou pa bezwen mande, kote ou pase, ou jwenn yon nonm ap fè mitin pou mande abitan al enskri pou vin vote pou li.

5

Se konsa grannèg lavil la ki zanmi ak Anemiz la,³ moute vin fè vizit Wobyon yon dimanch maten. Lè l rive, li vin fè ladesant lakay Liben. Li te pote bonkou kleren ak sigarèt. Li te vin ak yon kraze kòb degrennen an ti monnen senkant (50) ak ven (20) santim.⁴

Ou pa bezwen mande kou nouvèl la gaye. Anemiz pa gen kote pou mete moun nan lakou a. Madigra mele ak bon mas,⁵ tout sanble pou vin wè sa k genyen. Lamenm tanbou marye anba tonnèl la, epi chante gentan konmanse fèt sou kandida a.

Aprè yo fin pase tout moun yon bon razad kleren, yo louvri pòch sigarèt epi chak moun jwenn pa l. Lè sa a, Anemiz mande pou yo fè silans, pou yo kapab tande sa kandida a gen pou di.

Menm lè a, kandida a moute kanpe sou yon chèz, epi l konmanse di moun yo sa l gen lide fè pou Wobyon lè l moute depite. Pou konmanse, l ap fè gouvènman fè yon bèl wout pou sòti lavil vin isit. Aprè sa, l ap fè yo bati yon gwo kay pou fè mache, tankou sa lavil la. Ap gen kote pou abitan ki sòti lwen kapab dòmi, ap gen tiyo pou moun bwè dlo, ap gen latrin, ap gen kote pou machann chita. Moun p ap bezwen blayi machandiz atè. Lè pèp la tande kalite jan

Wobyon pral chanje, dènye moun di se pou depite sa a y ap vote.⁶

Aprè sa, kandida a renmèt Anemiz de (2) pakèt san (100) goud⁷ pou l kapab fè moun voye desann vin enskri lavil.

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Ou pa bezwen mande kalite kontan Anemiz kontan. Lamenm, li pran tèt Liben, li fè l konprann se toptop l ap tounen vin chèf seksyon, depi se nèg li a ki pase. Kanta pou timoun yo menm, se nan lekòl Pòtoprens l ap voye yo fin fè klas.

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Lamenm yo drese plan batay yo: Anemiz ap rete andeyò a pou sanble moun. Liben ap kondi yo mennen lavil pou fè yo pran kat. Gran ti jennonm yo a ki te deja an katriyèm lise,⁸ ap ale jwenn kandida a lavil pou ede l ranmase kat. Paske ou konnen se pa Wobyon ase moun ap sòti vin enskri. Gen tout Lewo Senmak, tout Latibonit. Se pou rezon sa a, ti jennonm lan t ap sitèlman gen travay, li pa t ap gen tan pou ale lekòl. Men pèsonn pa bezwen pè, depi kandida a pase, tout moun ap bon.

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Se sa k fè, lè ti lajan nèg la te bay la fini, Anemiz ak Liben mete tout ti kòb yo te genyen nan fè eleksyon. Yo vann bèf, yo kase depo manje, yo depanse lajan kòmès.

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Men pou di laverite, gen yon moun nan kay la ki pa t dakò menm nan koze a, se te Selyaniz. Li te toujou ap di: “Mezanmi o!... Sa m wè pou nou, Antwàn nan Gonmye pa wè l.’ Si pa malè pou nou, kandida a pa pase, kote n ap pran?”

Lè sa a, yo tout di l konsa: “Ou pa moun isit, sa ou konnen?... Kanta pou bon n ap bon!”¹⁰

Ou konnen long kou yon ti zèl pis yo t ap bon vre.¹¹ Men vwala sa k rive: yon senmenn anvan eleksyon fèt, Pòtoprens voye rele kandida a. Pèsonn pa janm konnen sa yo di l, ni sa yo pa di l, pase tounen l tounen, li fè tout moun konnen li retire kò l nan batay. Men sa pa vle di pou sa moun yo p ap vote non, sèlman se jou vòt la pou l fè yo konnen pou ki moun pou yo vote.

Ou pa bezwen mande ki kalite kou Liben pran. Malere a pa t menm kapab kalkile kantite lajan l ki te rantre nan koze eleksyon sa a.

Anemiz menm pa t gen bouch pou pale. Depi apre bagay sa a, li pèdi pye nèt nan kòmès. Se vre kandida a te ba l yon ti kòb pou penmèt li rantre nan depans li te fè, men l te blije pran ti kòb la renmèt moun li te dwe. Apre l fin peye dèt, li pa t menm rete lajan pou l achte yon kochon pou l travay.

Pou Liben menm se madanm li, Selyaniz, ki sove l. Si se pa t bon fanm sa a li te genyen, zafè l te nan lari nèt.¹² Lè madanm wè jan bagay pa bon, li degaje l fè yon vwayaj nan Nò. Rive la, fanmi l yo bat, yo degaje yo mete yon ti kòb nan men l pou l travay. Se konsa li tounen vin fè yon ti trimay. 5

Men nan tout moun yo, se timoun yo ki te pèdi plis. Wi se vre, apa ti dènye a ki te kontinye ap ale lekòl andeyò a, lòt de (2) pi gran yo te kite lekòl nèt. Premye ti gason an te deja fè yon lanne san l pa ale lekòl, konsa l te pèdi plas li nan lise a. Pi gran ti fi a menm pa t menm gen yon bon ti rad pou mete anwo l. 10

¹In Haiti's first political coup in more than 30 years, authority was assumed by a three-man Military Executive Committee in January 1946, until the election of Dumarsais Estimé in August 1946.

²It was only in October 1950, with the election of Paul Magloire, that the president of Haiti was elected directly (by males over 21) instead of being chosen by the National Assembly.

³This is the same **grannèg**, the store-owner in Chapter 4, whose influence enabled Liben to enter the Guard.

⁴The Haitian gourde (formerly worth 20 cents U.S.) is divided into 100 centimes (**santim**). Thus here the candidate has brought with him small change divided into the equivalent of 10 cents and 4 cents U.S.

Beginning in 1919 Haitian currency was tied directly to the U.S. dollar, and was long considered the most stable in the Caribbean, at the rate of five gourdes to the U.S. dollar. This was

to continue until the early 1980's, with the financial excesses of Jean-Claude Duvalier and especially his wife, Michèle Bennett Duvalier. Thus even now most Haitians still express prices in "Haitian dollars," i.e., in five-gourde units - although strictly speaking the so-called "Haitian dollar" has never existed.

⁵**Madigra mele ak bon mas** "All sorts of people;" i.e., good and bad, just as found at a Mardi Gras celebration.

⁶The candidate's promises depict vividly for us just what the people of this small Haitian community do not have, and what they perceive as being most useful. They are also quite representative of the empty promises made not just by Haitian politicians!

⁷100 gourdes = 20 dollars U.S. Thus Anemiz is to distribute the equivalent of 40 dollars U.S.

⁸See Chapter 8, Note 5.

⁹**Antwàn nan Gonmye pa wè l** "[even] Antoine, [a legendary seer] from Gonmier [in southern Haiti], could not have prophesied."

¹⁰**Kanta pou bon n ap bon!** "We'll make it for sure!"

¹¹**Ou konnen... bon vre** "You know, [except] by the length of a flea's little wing they would have made it;" i.e., they just missed winning by a hair.

¹²**zafè l... nèt** "his misfortune would have been obvious to all."

Chapit 10 - Siklòn Azèl



Depi apre koze eleksyon an, Liben te fè kwa pou l pa t janm tounen fourè tèt li nan kalite dra konsa. Se sa k fè, piti piti li t ap remoute kouran an ak madanm li.

Anemiz te mouri. Apre koze sa a, chagren te touye l. Pou kalite lajan li te pèdi, li te twò granmoun pou l te remoute kouran an.¹

De (2) pi gran timoun yo te kite andeyò a apre lanmò granmè a. Pi gran ti gason an te jwenn travay nan yon magazen. Se nèg eleksyon an ki te fè l rantr nan ti djòb sa a. Se pa t yon gwo travay non, men sa te penmèt li viv.

Lòt gran ti madmwazèl la menm te desann vin jwenn madanm kote Anemiz te konn fè ladesant, lè l te konn vin lavil. Madanm sa a te fin granmoun, se sa k fè l te bezwen yon jenn moun pou te ba l konkou nan fè rad pakoti pou vann. Se konsa ti madmwazèl la te vin rete nan kay la. Li te fè tout kalite travay ki te gen pou fèt. Li te fè travay kay, li te woule machin a koud, li te kontwole pakoti ak moun ki te pran machandiz pou vann nan mache. Men malgre tout kantite travay sa a ki te sou kont li, li te pito viv lavil la, pase pou l ta tounen andeyò a.

Se dènye ti gason an ase ki te tout nan kay la. Lòt gran timoun yo pa t janm voye nouvèl bay andeyò a. Se pou rezon sa a kay la te vin tris.

Yon jou, Selyaniz di Liben konsa: “Poukisa ou lage kò ou konsa? Ou pa ka mouri dèyè timoun yo. Ak Bondye, nou gen ti dènye a. Se pou n bat avè l pou n wè si l p ap sove. Se lekòl ki gate timoun yo. Sa pou n fè, se pou n wete ti konpè a lekòl, epi mete l nan travay.”²

Se konsa, Liben tou retire dènye pitit li a lekòl, epi l mete l nan travay di. Chak jou, depi ou tande pipirit chante,³ yo leve ansanm, yo sele bèt yo epi y ale nan jaden. Se konsa, piti piti Liben vin konmanse ap reprann pye.

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Selyaniz menm sou bò pa l pa t manke degaje l nan kòmès vyann kochon Anemiz te kite a. Depi bèlmè a te mouri a, li te sispann vye kòmès kenkay li t ap fè a. Li te pran tout ti kòb li te sòti nan Nò a, li te foure l nan kòmès vyann. Konsa piti piti, kay la te vin yon ti jan pi anfòm.

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Lè Liben wè bagay yon ti jan ap mache, li vin reprann trafik li te konn fè lontan an. Li vin reprann trafik kafe a.⁴ Ak ti kòb li te pran nan men gwo espekilatè yo, li te pwonmennen achte kafe seriz nan men abitan yo. Apre sa li te fè yo cheche, li te pile yo, epi l te revann ak moun yo ki te ba l lajan an. Se pa toutan trafik la bon non, men lè ou tande gen anpil kafe, ou kapab espere fè yon bon benefis. Se rezon sa a ki fè Liben te toujou ap siveye lè l wè branch kafe yo koule ba ak seriz pou l rantre pi fon nan trafik la. Se sa k fè pou jan l te wè kafe yo donnen lanne sa a, li te konnen afè l t ap bon.

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Jou sa a, li te fèk sòti fè tiraj lajan nan men espekilatè yo. Kou l rive lakay, konsa lapli

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konmanse tonbe. Se vre depi granmmaten solèy la te bouche je l. Men Liben te kwè se yon lapli tankou tout lapli. Pèsonn pa t konprann nan ki kalite tèt chaje yo ta pral tonbe.

Nan denmen maten, pase pou lapli a rete, li redouble pi rèd. Rive sou kouran midi, tan an vin fèmen tou nwa tankou si l te aswè. Lamenm lapli konmanse tonbe. Lapli tonbe san rete pou jouk aswè. Lè aswè vin rive, se lè sa a, lapli di t ap tonbe. Depi ou tande a, lakou a pa gen kote pou kenbe dlo ankò. Dlo a sitèlman anpil, li moute kouvri tout ti glasi ki devan pòt la. Se andedan kay tout moun blije rantre. Pandan yo chita, konsa yo santi pye yo nan dlo. Lè yo gade, yo tou sezi wè dlo plen kay la. Lamenm, yon gwo van konmanse soufle, lapli ap tonbe. Dènye pyebwa nan lakou a konmanse tòdye, branch ap kase voye tout kote. Pandan yo tout chita andedan kay la, yo tande bri kochon an ap rele nan pak la tankou si ou ta di se touye y ap touye l. Liben ta byen renmen sòti ale wè sa l genyen, men Selyaniz di l pa fè sa. Epitou, gaz nan lanp la te fini, se nan fènwa yo te ye. Se pa ti pè yo te pè. Pou kalite jan yo tande van an ap rele, se tankou si ou ta di chen ki wè revenan.

Wi, lapli fè de (2) jou de (2) nwit ap tonbe san rete. Depi sou grann igrann, se premye fwa yo te wè kalite kalamite sa a tonbe sou Wobyon.

Dènye seriz kafe te pèdi nan lavalas. Dènye kochon, bèf ak kabrit te pèdi nan kouran dlo. Pifò kay nan peyi a te kraze.

Aprè kèk jou, moun ki te resi jwenn chemen pou pase desann lavil, tounen ak move nouvèl. Yo di konsa se sou tout peyi a nèt kalamite sa a tonbe. Kanta pou nan Sid menm, pa gen kote pou antere kadav. Se yon siklòn. Yo rele l Azèl, se li ki fè kalite dega sa a.⁵

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¹Note how briefly, almost matter-of-factly, the death of one of the three main characters is stated. Is the author suggesting the abruptness of an all too commonplace event in peasant existence?

²Cf. the attitude of the two older children as expressed in Chapter 8, page 45, line 26 - page 46, line 3, as well as the way they subsequently ignore their parents. To this must be added the deep-rooted mistrust of many peasants concerning formal education.

³**pipirit** See Chapter 8, Note 3.

⁴This is the first mention in the text of Liben as a middleman in the coffee business. However, we thus have an added dimension to the misfortunes brought on by a major tropical hurricane.

⁵Hurricane Hazel, October 1954, was one of the worst storms ever to hit Haiti. The most serious damage was done on the southern peninsula in Jérémie and Les Cayes. In all, several hundred persons were killed, and 100,000 left homeless. With crops devastated, there were months of starvation in the remote villages.

In addition, the flooding accompanying a major hurricane breeds more mosquitoes and thus more malaria.

Chapit 11 - Rantre nan Boukannen Dlo



Mezanmi!... M ta mèt vle di nou ki kalite sitirasyon siklòn Azèl te kite nan peyi a, nou p ap janm vle kwè se vre. Se tout moun nèt ki te nan ka. Kanta Liben menm, pa t gen bouch pou pale. Nou chonje m t ap di nou mesye te fèk tire yon kòb jou move tan an konmanse a. Mezi kòb la

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pase nèt nan men malere a. Bagay ki pi rèd, pa t gen yon ti grenn kafe ki ta pou penmèt li fè yon woulman nan kòmès la.

Sou bò madanm menm, se men nan machwè.¹ Dènye kochon nan raje a te mouri. Youn youn² ki te resi sove, gwo machann griyo lavil yo pa bay tan pou fè jis pri. Se konsa menm ti lajan Selyaniz te konn woule a pase tou. Pou di ou laverite, se depi lè sa a ou kapab di Liben rantre nan penpennen, nan boukannen dlo.³

Lè sa a, nèg la mawon lavil la nèt. Li fè yon dènye rasanble, mezi sa l te kapab jwenn. Li pase pa mòn, li teri jouk Matino bò Lachapèl. Rive la, li mare yon ti ke kòb, epi l achte latanyen. Tounen l tounen, li mete ni madanm, ni dènye ti konpè a nan trese latanyen pou fè sak pay ak atè miyò. Wi, se konsa Liben te resi kenbe ak moun li yo pou grangou pa t touye yo andeyò a.

Yon jou apremidi, tout fanmi an te chita anba tonnèl kizin lan ap travay. Lè sa a, solèy te yon ti jan vle pral kouche. Te gen anpil abitan ap pase sou gran chemen an. Yo te sòti fè mache lavil Senmak. Pandan Liben t ap koud yon makout yo te kòmande l, konsa konpè l ki te sòti lavil la vin rive.

Lè sa a, Liben fè ti jennonm lan ba l yon chèz epi, san l pa sispann travay li, li di konsa: “Konpè Dye⁴ o!... Kouman sitirasyon an ye sou bò pa ou?”

Konpè Dye menm pran san l, li poze ralfò 5
ki te pandye nan do l la atè. Li chita yon ti jan antravè sou chèz la, epi l reponn: “Ak Bondye, sa pa pi mal non.⁵ M te fè yon desann bò lavil la. M konnen ou se nèg ki fimen rèd, men m te pote 10
kèk fèy tabak mannòk pou ou.”

Lamenm, konpè Dye renmèt jennonm lan tabak la pou l ale depoze andedan kay. Li vanse chèz la bò kote Liben an, li panche kò l, epi l di: “Konpè Liben o!... Bagay gate wi lavil la. Yo di se lame ki pran pouvwa. Ou pa remake jan tout 15
abitan tounen byen bonè. Lavil la kaye ak jandam. Depi aswè rive, moun pa sikile nan lari.”

Lè Liben tande gwo koze sa a, li sispann travay, li mete yon men nan machwè l, epi l di: “Konpè Dye o!... Zafè grannèg pa gade nou non. 20
Men, pou jan bagay la ap vini an, ou kwè malere ap kapab moute chòdyè?”

Wi se vre, Liben te gen rezon, bagay la te vin pi tchak andeyò a. Ou pa bezwen mande, abitan pa t menm gen lajan pou yo manje, alewè 25

pou achte atè miyò. Se sa k fè plis Liben te travay, se plis sitirasyon an te mangonmen.

Se vre, gen anpil nèg andeyò a ki t ap degaje yo ak koze eleksyon. Se chak senmenn yon lòt kandida te parèt.⁶ Pou prezidan menm, se pa pale. Anvan ou gen tan aprann non youn, ou tandè se yon lòt ki moute.⁷ Men pwovèb la di konsa: “Chat chode nan dlo cho, kou l wè dlo frèt, li kouri.” Se konsa, depi Liben te chode premye fwa a, li te pè tounen nan koze eleksyon.

Men pou di vre, Liben pa t janm kwè yon jou li ta kapab regrèt sa l te fè a. Nan lide pa l, li te kwè l te lib fè sa l vle. Li te kwè, si l pa t pran pozisyon pou pèsonn, se sa k ta pi bon.

Gen yon pwovèb kreyòl ki di: “Bay kou bliye, pote mak chonje.”⁸ Liben te fin bliye tout vye istwa ki te pase depi lè l te chèf seksyon. Li te bliye tout moun ki te pase nan pikèt devan pòt li pou vòlò kabrit. Men moun sa yo pa t janm bliye. Se tann yo t ap tann jou pa yo rive pou pran revanj yo.

Se sa k fè jou eleksyon an, anpil nan yo t ap siveye pou wè ki moun k ap desann lavil al vote. Depi yon moun te rete chita lakay li jou sa a, se bon l pa t bon.

Pwovèb la di: “Si m te konnen toujou dèyè!”⁹ Paske Liben pa t fè yon pa jou dimanch sa a, se lanmò sèl ki pral sove l anba malè.¹⁰

¹**se men nan machwè** “she was greatly worried.”

²**Youn youn** “Even if one here and there, even if an occasional one.”

³**nan boukannen dlo** “[was reduced to] barbecuing water;” i.e., meaningless activity.

⁴This is the same **konpè Dye** who lent Anemiz a female donkey, Chapter 7, page 38, line 13.

⁵This very common expression can be said to reveal something of the Haitian peasant’s outlook on life: even if things are no better, at least they are no worse.

⁶There were no less than 19 presidential candidates proclaimed at this time (late 1956).

⁷12 December 1956, President Paul Magloire fell, and Nemours Pierre-Louis became provisional president - for less than two months. There were four additional ephemeral governments before the election in September 1957 of President François Duvalier. (Cf. the similar political situation during the period 1908-15 preceding the U.S. Occupation, as described in Chapter 3, page 15, lines 13-19.)

⁸“[He who] strikes the blow forgets, [he who] bears the scar remembers.”

⁹“If I had known, always behind;” i.e., people who say, ‘If only I had known...’ always come in last.

¹⁰This ominous ending can be seen as a preparation for the following Chapters. Those who bear a grudge against Liben, from his days as police chief, will denounce him. Since he did not vote, they can claim he is opposed to the government: “anyone who is not with us is against us.”

Chapit 12 - Yon Ti Kwi Kribich



Jou mèkredi sa a, tonton Liben pa t fè yon pa kare. Depi granmtimaten li te leve byen bonè pou l te kapab fin pare kèk fopanno pou voye vann nan mache a. Se konsa, lè solèy konmanse ap moute nan syèl la, li renmèt Selyaniz twa (3) fopanno. Konsa l a vann yo chak pou twa (3) gouden, epi l a jwenn lajan pou fè yon ti

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pwovizyon pou kay la. Se pou l achte lwil, savon, gaz, tabak, epi lòt ti bagay kay la bezwen.

Rive nan mache a, Selyaniz fè pi bon zafè pase l te kwè. Li vann chak fopanno pou yon pyas ven (20) kòb. Konsa li te gen yon bon ti kraze kòb pou tèt pa l. Se pa ti kontan malerèz la te kontan ti lajan sa a ki te vin anplis nan men li. Pou konmanse, li achte yon bèl mouchwa foula pou yon pyas. Ak rès kòb la, li te vle achte bagay pou l ale fè yon bon ti manje pou Liben.

Se konsa, pandan l ap mache wè sa k gen pou vann nan mache a, li kontre ak yon ti gason ki pote yon ti kwi kribich pou l vann. Lamenm, li tanmen machande, fè jis pri ak ti gason an. Rale mennen kase,¹ yo vin tonbe dakò sou pri vennsenk (25) kòb pou kwi kribich la.

Men pandan Selyaniz t ap diskite pri ak ti gason an, li pa t wè te gen yon gwo fanm woujat vin kanpe bò kote l te ye a. Se vre wi, te gen yon fanm vin kanpe nan do Selyaniz la. Li te rete kanpe ap gade pou wè si ti gason an ta bay Selyaniz tout kwi kribich la pou ti kraze kòb sa a. Se yon chèf wi madanm lan te ye, men Selyaniz pa t konn sa.

Madanm lan menm pa t pou kont li non. Li te gen de (2) sekretè ap mache dèyè do l. Yo

chak te gen yon revòlvè nan ren yo, yon gwo chaplèt, ak yon bèl rigwaz nan men yo. Kote madanm lan te fè, yo te fè dèyè l. Se sa k fè, lè madanm lan te kanpe ap koute Selyaniz fè pri kwi kribich la, de (2) sekretè yo te la tou. Se konsa, kon ti gason an di Selyaniz li mèt pran kribich yo pou vennsenk (25) kòb, madanm lan pwoche pi pre, li pouse Selyaniz ak bra l, epi l di ti gason an: 5

“Mete kribich yo la a pou mwen.”

Lè Selyaniz santi bra moun lan ap pouse l, li vire tèt gade pou l wè ki moun sa a. Lè l tande sa madanm lan di ti gason an, li reponn: “Ou pa ta kapab sòti byen lwen pou vin pran kribich la... Se mwen menm ki fè pri, se mwen ki pou achte l.” 10 15

Lamenm, Selyaniz pouse bra madanm lan, epi l pare vèsò pa l. Lè sa a madanm lan di Selyaniz konsa: “Ou gen lè pa wè ak ki moun ou ap pale la a. Ou pa konnen se mwen menm ki kòmande isit la!”² 20

Sa ou tande a, madanm lan fè de (2) sekretè yo yon siy... Lamenm chaplèt ak rigwaz konmanse tonbe sou malèz la. Anvan ti madanm bat je, Selyaniz gentan benyen nan san. Dènye pwovizyon tonbe, rad sou li tounen ranyon. 25

Lè yo kondi l mennen nan pòs la, gen youn nan chèf yo ki di konsa: “Apa Selyaniz, fanm Liben an, sa. Se pou n te touye l menm; se move je moun sa yo ye.”³

Se konsa Selyaniz twouve li nan pòs.⁴

Se jouk byen ta lè solèy fin kouche, yon vwazinay glise kò l nan fènwa a vin manyè bay Liben koze a. Lè Liben tande sa, li pati tankou yon moun fou ale nan pòs la. Rive la, mesye ak revòlvè yo di l konsa: “Madanm ou nan ka wi! Li manke chèf la respè. Se sa k fè chèf la di se pou l peye senkant (50) goud amann anvan y a kite l sòti.”⁵

Lè Liben tande sa, li pa di anyen, pase l derape dèyè yon senkant (50) pyas.

Bondye fè se pa tout moun nan katye a ki te rayi yo. Pou di laverite, pifò moun te renmen Liben. Se sa k fè, nan denmen maten gen anpil moun ki voye ti kòb prete l anba chal. Konsa konsa, vè midi li resi sanble lajan an, li pote l bay, epi l tounen ak Selyaniz.

Lè y ap tounen, yo jwenn chemen an blanch. Pa gen yon moun ki parèt tèt pou di yo bonjou. Menm moun ki te prete yo ti kòb te rale pòt fèmen lè y ap pase.⁶

Rive lakay, Liben chofe dlo, li fè twalèt madanm lan. Li pran yon dènnye ven (20) kòb ki te sou etajè a, li voye ti gason li ale achte enpe lwil masketi. Li chofe lwil la ti kras, epi l fwote tout kò malerèz la ak lwil. Pandan l ap friksyonnen madanm lan, li di konsa: 5

“Selyaniz o!... Pa pito m degaje m voye ou ansanm ak pitit ou wè moun ou yo nan Nò?...”⁷

¹See Chapter 2, Note 9.

²The woman is a local commander of the Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale (VSN), Papa Doc’s notorious paramilitary organization better known as the **tonton makout**. Established as a counter-weight to the regular Haitian army, it enabled Duvalier to maintain power by playing one force off against the other, just as Hitler remained in power using the SS to offset the regular German army. **Tonton makout** members had in effect unbridled power to treat the population as they wished. The female equivalent of the **tonton makout** were known as the **Fiyèt Lalo**, and in fact the head of the VSN nation-wide was a woman, Rosalie Adolphe, whose greatest pleasure is said to have been to personally torture prisoners to death. With the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986, she is believed to have escaped in disguise, and lived out her days under an alias in Florida. (Notes such as this would have been unthinkable in our first edition of this text in 1982, while still during the Duvalier regime, and could well have had dire consequences for Carrié Paultre and for his family as well.)

³**se move... ye** “those people have the evil eye;” i.e., they are bad people capable of anything.

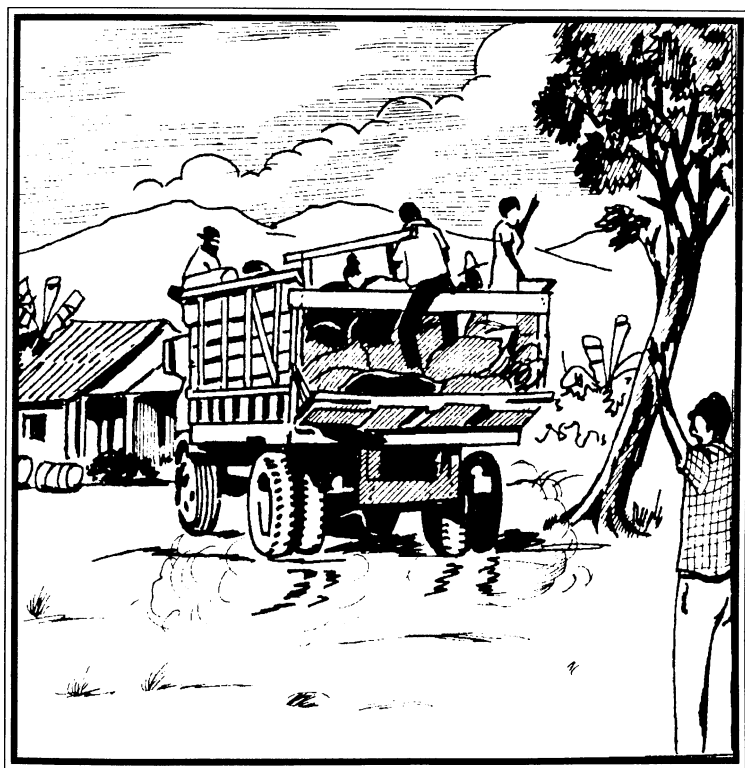
⁴This occurrence in the marketplace can be interpreted as an almost gratuitous act of haughtiness on the part of a person in authority, or as a provoked incident aimed essentially at Liben.

⁵No judge, no jury. An example of the totally arbitrary justice of the time, based essentially upon the whim of the person in power.

⁶Such was the fear inspired by the Duvalier regime and its **tonton makout**.

⁷Had Liben been of the bourgeois class of Haitians, he would have fled the country with his wife and family - thereby adding to Haiti's disastrous "brain drain" under the Duvaliers. However as a peasant, this option was far beyond his means, and his only recourse at the time was to get at least his wife and child to safety in another part of the country where they were not known. In later years he might well have become part of the "boat people," but in the 1960's it was essentially the "Boeing people" (bourgeois) who sought refuge abroad.

Chapit 13 - Lage nan Lavi a



Pwovèb la di: “Kò se zèb, l a pouse ankò.”¹
Ou konnen se vre wi, senmenn lan patko bout,
Selyaniz te refè nèt. Men malgre sa, Liben pa t
sispann fè tèt li travay pou wè kote l ta bare ak
yon lajan. Toutan li pa t rive fè Selyaniz ale
Otwou, li pa t ap janm kapab dòmi. Se sa k fè, lè
bout pou bout li pa ka jwenn kòb, li vin fè lide
vann mal bourik li a. Se vre, zannimo a te itil li,

5

men li te pito defèt li, pase pou l ta wè Selyaniz pran yon lòt je baton.

Se konsa Liben vann mal bourik la pou katreven (80) pyas. Se ak lajan sa a, li degaje l fè madanm lan pati ansanm ak dènye pitit gason yo a.²

Lè Selyaniz wè se toutbon l ap blije pati kite Liben, li vin gen yon kè sere ki pa janm kite l.

Dènye ti konpè a menm pa t fin twò konprann. Sa te fè l plezi wè jan papa l achte chemiz, pantalon ak sapat nèf pou li. Se vre wi, malere a achte rad nèf pou moun yo.

Lè jou a rive pou moun yo pati, Liben desann lavil ak yo, depi granmtimaten. Li fè madanm lan ak pitit la mache devan, epi li menm li mache dèyè ak malèt la sou tèt li. Konsa lè yo rive nan bout mache a, kote kamyon konn pase a, timoun te fèk tanmen pral lekòl. Se sa k fè yo te rete tann yon bon moman, anvan kamyon Okap la vin rive.

Men lè kamyon an rive, bèf chenn yo pa bay malerèz la yon ti tan pou l di Liben orevwa. Pase yo pran malèt la ak yon ti panyen li te pote, yo voye yo anwo kapòt la. Yo fè l chita ak ti konpè

a anwo l, epi lamenn yo di: “Ba li bwa, chofè!
Pye l pèdi tè...”³

Se konsa Liben rale yon mouchwa foula
wouj ki te nan pòch li, li siye kèk grenn swè ki t
ap koule sou figi l. Pandan kamyon an ap fè koube 5
la pou l disparèt, li wè men Selyaniz ap fè l babay.

Anvan malere a pran chemen pou tounen
lakay, li fè yon ti piwèt lavil la pou manyè pran
nouvèl lòt timoun yo. Pou konmanse, li fè yon
pase bò magazen kote premye pitit gason li t ap 10
travay la. Rive la, li tou sezi wè tout pòt magazen
an fèmen.

Sou galeri a, li wè yon bòs fèblantye k ap fè
recho. Lè l mande nèg la pou mèt magazen an,
nèg la di konsa: “Ou gen lè fou, tonton sa a?... 15
Se jòdi⁴ yo kouri ak mèt magazen sa a. Pèsonn
pa konn kote l ye. Sèlman jennonn ki t ap travay
ak li a te gen tan chape kò l. Gen moun ki di se
Naso li ye kounyeya.”

Lè Liben tande koze a, li chape kò l tou 20
dousman. Se lè l rive lakay madanm kote pitit fi l
la t ap travay la, se lè sa a li rekonèt li. Lè madanm
lan wè jan nèg la te dekonpoze, li fè chofe enpe
kafe pote bay tonton an. Sa te penmèt nèg la pran
yon souf anvan l pran dènye kou a. 25

Wi, Liben ta pral resevwa yon dènye sezisman.

Aprè madanm lan fin ba l bwè kafe a, li fè l rantre nan chanm, kote l kapab pale alèz pou pèsonn pa tande. Lè l fin kontwole si tout pòt fèmen, li di Liben konsa: “Ou wè nan ki kalite tèt chaje madmwazèl ou a mete m?... Men se pa fòt li non, kite m di ou!”

“Depi kèk jou, gen yon gwo chèf nan katye a ki dèyè pitit la. Chak fwa pitit la ap pase nan lari a, li di konsa: ‘Ala yon konmè ki anfòm, papa! M ta renmen di yon koze ak li...’ Senmenn pase a, li mache tou kare vin jouk andedan salon, li vin fè madmwazèl la konnen l ap vin chache l aswè pou mennen l nan bal. Madmwazèl la mete l nan plas li. Li fè l konprann sa l kwè a, se pa sa. Chèf la menm move, epi lè l ap desann galeri a, li di konsa: ‘Kanta pou peye, m ap fè ou peye sa chè!’ Tande madmwazèl la tande koze a, li ranmase tout zafè l, li mete yo nan yon sak, epi l tou pati ale kache Pòtoprens.”⁵

Lè Liben tande zen sa a, lapawòl li koupe nèt. Men pou souf li kapab tounen, madanm lan di konsa: “Ou pa bezwen pran twòp lapenn non. Lòt jou gen yon moun ki te kontre l laba a. Moun lan di m li jwenn yon bon travay.”

Lanjelis t ap sonnen lè Liben pran Pòtay Pivè⁶ ap tounen lakay li.

Epi se konsa, depi jou sa a Liben lage nan lavi a “tankou yeye te ye.”

5

¹**“Kò se zèb, l a pouse ankò”** “The human body is like grass, it’ll grow back again.”

²For the Haitian peasant, selling his donkey is an act of sheer desperation. Thus we understand to what extent Liben feels his wife is in danger. (Author’s Note.)

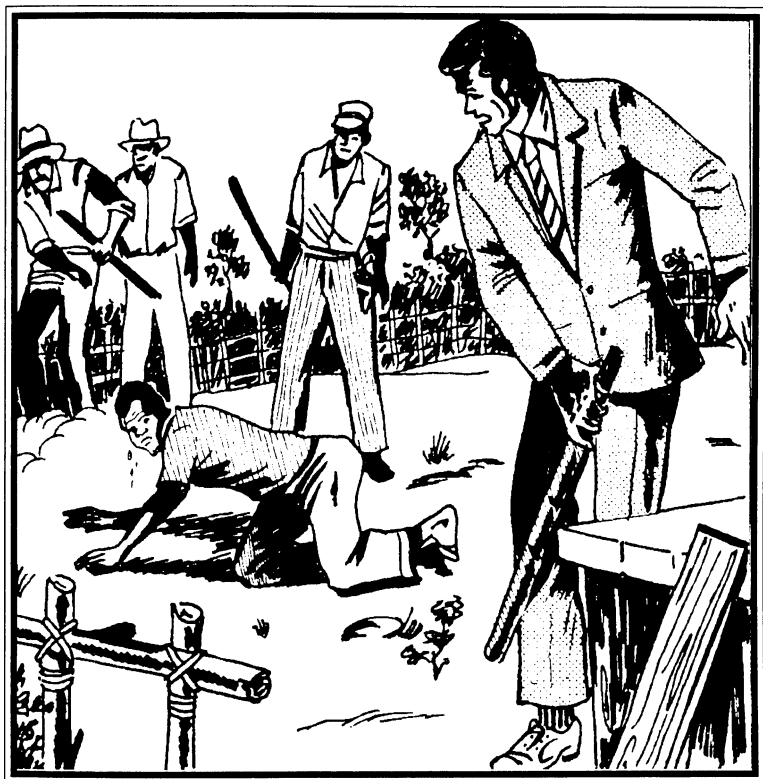
³**“Ba li... tè”** “Give it wood, driver! her foot has left ground;” i.e., Give her [the bus] gas, driver! She [Selyaniz] is on board.

⁴**“Se jòdi”** “A long time ago.” Note that **jòdi a** means “today,” whereas **se jòdi** (without **a**) is a special construction with an entirely different meaning.

⁵The apparently gratuitous or semi-gratuitous attack on Selyaniz and later the frightened reaction of Liben’s neighbors, the mysterious abduction of the storekeeper connected to the would-be politician, as well as the sexual harassment of Liben’s daughter by a man with political power, are all representative of the types of abuse endured by the Haitian population under the Duvalier regime and their **tonton makout**.

⁶**Pòtay Pivè** Portail Pivert, one of the four entrances to Saint-Marc.

Chapit 14 - Anba Mapou a



Lè malè konsa tonbe sou yon nonm, toutan l pa wè fen ou, li p ap rete.¹ Kanta pou sa, malè pa t pran vakans menm ak Liben. Se sòti nan youn, tonbe nan yon lòt.

Andeyò, moun bati kay nenpòt kijan. Depi yon jenn moun rive nan laj pou l fè pozisyon, fanmi l ba l yon ti kal tè, jis kont pou l moute yon

kay. Konsa tè kote kay la bati a pa gen papye. Se yon sèl papye tè ki garanti tout bitasyon an.²

Se nan sitirasyon sa a Liben te tonbe. Papye tè ki te garanti anplasman kote kay li te bati a, pa t nan men l. Se nan men pitit yon kouzen papa l papye a te ye. Jennonm sa a te kite andeyò depi lontan, se fondepouvwa l te ye. Pèsonn lavil la pa t konnen moun ki kote l ye.³

Se konsa, yon jou lendi maten, nèg la debake andeyò a ak tout apantè l, li vin fèmen perimèt bitasyon gran granpapa l te kite pou li. Lè yo rive pou kouri chenn sou anplasman kote kay Liben te bati a, Liben vin pou mete opozisyon. Lè sa a makout woule malere a anba chaplèt, epi fondepouvwa a fè fèmen l nan prizon.

* * *

Pou di laverite, Liben pa menm konnen konben tan l fè nan prizon an. Paske, yon jou apremidi, li chita konsa, epi l wè yon gran chèf vin fè vizit prizon an. Lè chèf la rive bò kote l te ye a, li leve kanpe. Chèf la poze l kèk kèsyon, epi l di gad ki te avè l la: “Denmen maten ou mèl lage nonm sa a.”⁴ Se konsa Liben twouve l nan lari a san l pa menm konn kote pou l mete tèt li.

Bout pou bout, mesye kase chavire sou mòn Gouyavye. Lè l rive, li tou sezi wè te gen yon bèl kay bati nan pozisyon kote l te rete a. Li kontre ak yon jenn ti pitit ki te sòti nan dlo, li mande l ki moun ki rete nan bèl kay sa a. Ti pitit la di l konsa: 5
 “Se yon grannèg lavil ki konn vin ansanm ak yon bann lòt moun nan kay la. Men se lè vandredi, samdi ak dimanch ase yo vini. Se sa k fè pandan rès senmenn lan, kay la fèmen. Se yon jeran ki rete nan lakou a.” 10

Lè Liben tandè koze a, li pase chemen l dwat epi, rive anba gwo pye mapou ki nan kafou a, li tou chita nan mouda mapou a pou l pran yon ti pòz. Lè sa a lekòl te fèk ap lage. Tout elèv yo t ap vin achte kann kale nan men mwen.⁵ 15

Se sa k fè lè Liben te fèk vini, mwen pa t menm wè l. Se jouk byen ta, m voye je m epi mwen wè tonton an ap kabicha. Lè sa a, mwen pwoche epi m di: “Apa kaporal Liben sa?” Menm lè a, Liben pantan, li louvri je l epi l reponn: “Me 20
 wi, bòs Dò, se mwen menm wi.... Se jòdi a m lage sòti nan prizon, m te vin wè kouman peyi a ye.”

Lè sa a mwen pa di anyen. Mwen pran chapo m, mwen manyè pouse enpe fatra, epi m tou chita sou rasin mapou a bò kote Liben an. 25
 Mwen mete yon men nan machwè m, epi m di: “Lanne pase a, te gen yon moun ki vin ap mande

pou ou wi nan katye a. Se mwen menm yo te mennen l vin jwenn. Li te pote yon lèt pou ou. Men pèsoun pa t vle pran lèt la. Se pa fòt nou non, nou pa t konn kote ou ye. Men li te di nou sa k te gen nan lèt la wi!”

“Li te di nou, Selyaniz te voye di ou, si ou ta kapab degaje ou voye chache l. Anyen pa t bon nan Nò a. Tout moun li yo te fin nan malsite. Lapli pa tonbe, jaden pa donner, dènye zannimo fin mouri!... Lè sa a, m te di l di Selyaniz ki kalite malè ki te rive ou. Yo te sezi kay la, epi yo te mete ou nan prizon.”

Lè mwen fin pale, mwen voye je m, epi m wè dlo ap koule sou figi Liben. Lè m wè sa, mwen poze yon men sou zepòl tonton an, epi m di: “Se pou ou pran kouray. Bondye va ede ou remoute kouran an ankò. Si ou pa gen kote pou ou dòmi, m a mennen ou ale dòmi avè m... Se mwen menm ki reskonsab lakou legliz la. Pastè a ban m yon gwo pyès kay pou m dòmi pou kont mwen. Kite m fin ranmase ti rès kann ki rete a, m a mennen ou avè m.”

Epi se konsa Liben ak mwen menm vin tounen de (2) degouden nan yon papyè goud.⁶ Wi, nou de (2), nou te peze kafe nou nan menm balans.⁷ Se vre nou pa t gen anyen nan lavi a,

men malgre mizè, nou te mete tèt ansanm pou nou bat.

Mwen te fè Liben jwenn yon ti kraze kòb prete, pou l achte materyo. Mwen te fè l jwenn yon ti kote anba mapou a. Se konsa Liben vin moute travay fè tetyè pit pou vann ak abitan k ap pase nan kafou a.

5

¹**tout tan l... rete** “as long as it [misfortune] has not seen the end of you [finished you off], it won’t stop.”

²The lack of a proper land title is an ever-gnawing source of worry for the Haitian peasant, for should his property become too desirable, there is the distinct danger of its being seized by another.

³**Pèsonn lavil... ye** “No one in Saint-Marc knew where he was from;” i.e., in town life he disguised his country origins.

⁴Again, the Haitian peasant’s life and fortune are at the whim of some “**gran chèf**.” Haitians complain that their justice system is one of men, not of laws. (But is that not essentially the case in many another country as well, and not just in the less prosperous ones!?) Haitian prisons are notorious for keeping little or no records of their inmates. In all probability no one any more than Liben himself knew just how long he had been incarcerated. And is he released simply because he exhibited the proper humble attitude toward the “**gran chèf**?”

⁵The narrator, bès Dò, now appears directly. The full circle joining the conclusion to the beginning will soon be complete.

⁶**vin tounen... goud** “came to become two dimes in a [20-cent] paper gourde;” i.e., became inseparable.

⁷See Chapter 5, Note 7.



Chapit 15 - Nan Limyè yon Vye Fannal



Mezanmi, lavi malere se mistè. Chak jou depi premye chan kòk, Liben kanpe sou pye l. Li gen pou l bale tout lakou legliz la nèt. Li sanble tout fatra a anba gwo pye kenèp la, epi l boule yo. Fini l fini, li pran kalbas, epi l al chache dlo. Tounen li tounen, li ranmase pakèt materyo li, epi l al chita anba mapou a pou l travay.

5

Se pa tetyè ase non li te fè. Li te konn fè sang ak fopanno tou. Men bagay sa yo, se sou kòmann li te fè yo. Li pa t janm vle fè yo mete la,¹ paske l di yo pa vle peye l pri kouray li. Se la anba pye mapou a li pase tout jounen l. Se jouk lè labrin ap fin tonbe, se lè sa a li ranmase ralfò li ansanm ak materyo epi machandiz ki pa vann. Li mete yo anba bra l, epi li tounen vin nan lakou a.

Se lè sa a li moute chòdyè l. Jou mwen pa moute chòdyè, li pa janm pa kite yon moso manje pou mwen. Fini l fin manje, li moute kabann li. Lamenm li konmanse pale pou kont li nan dòm. Se toutan l ap nonmen non Selyaniz ak timoun yo. Lè konsa li pale ak yo tankou si yo te la bò kabann lan.

Li te toujou mete nan lide l pou l sanble yon ti kòb pou l ale nan Nò wè madanm lan. Li pa t lwen ale non, paske ti kòb la te deja rive katreven (80) pyas.² Se nan men bòs Iram,³ ebenis la, lajan an te ye. Se lè Liben mouri a, m konnen li te gen tout lajan sa a. Se lajan sa a ki sèvi pou fè lantèman an.⁴ Bòs Iram pran swasant (60) pyas nan lajan an pou l fè yon sèkèy. Rès lajan an, li renmèt mwen li.

Mwen menm pou kont pa m, m mete dis (10) pyas anwo l. Se konsa m achte yon pijama

nèf pou kenz (15) pyas, epi rès kenz (15) pyas ki rete a, m achte sik, kafe epi jenjanm pou fè te. Se pou moun pa vin fè eskandal nan lakou legliz la, ki fè m pito vin fè veye a nan lakou bòs Iram lan. Se pa yon bank vakabon m ap moute. M pa gen kòb pou m achte kleren bay jenn gason bwè. 5

Lè sa a, gen youn nan jenn gason yo ki di l konsa: “Bon, lepè! Kalite veye sa yo se frè ak sè ki pou vin ede ou kenbe rèl la. Kote ou janm tandè veye pa gen gwòg?” 10

Anvan bòs Dò gen tan reponn, yon lòt jenn gason di konsa: “Monchè, pa di bagay konsa non. Sa pa fè kè ou fè ou mal pou wè tout kalite mati yon malere kapab pase sou tè a? Mwen pou kont pa m, chak jou m pase anba mapou a, m wè tonton an ap travay. Men mwen pa t janm kwè se kalite moun sa a li te ye. Senmenn pase a li t ap travay nan kafou a.”⁵ 15

Lè sa a, bòs Dò di: “Me wi! Se samdi swa gwo lapli a mouye l. Se moun ki pa janm vle kite fredri pran l. Men jou sa a, lapli a vini san pèsoun pa t wè l pare. Se sa k fè granmoun lan pa t gen tan ranmase zafè l, kòm lapli a mouye l jouk nan zo. Nan dimanch maten, lè m wè l pa leve, mwen mande l sa l genyen. Se lè sa a li di m li gen lafyèv, epi l santi yon doulè nan tout kò l.⁶ M te fè lide desann li lopital, men l pa t ka mache. Fòk se sou 20 25

branka m ta pote l desann!... Kounyeya kote pou ou jwenn moun vin ba ou konkou pou desann mòn lan?”

“M te bouyi te monben bata ak fèy bwadchenn ba l bwè, men maladi a te gentan pran devan. Malere a fè tout nwit ayè a ap rele Selyaniz. Maten an, depi solèy leve, li pa janm pale pase l ap plenn. Sou kouran midi, m pote yon ti labouyi farin mayi pou li. Se lè sa a m tou sezi wè l mouri.”

Kou bòs Dò sispann pale konsa, kòk konmanse chante. Lalin te nan dènnye katye, se sa k fè se yon moso ase ki te parèt sou tèt mòn lan.

Bòs Iram menm t ap fin kloure sèkèy la nan limyè yon vye fannal. Te gen kèk frè ak sè ki t ap chante kantik. Se konsa:

Wè pa wè, lantèman tonton Liben pou katrè.⁷

¹fè yo mete la “to have them [the straps and saddle cushions] put out there [on display for sale];” i.e., he made them on special order only, not on speculation.

²This was the same sum for which he sold his donkey (Chapter 13, page 74, line 4), and which enabled him to buy new clothes for his wife and youngest son, and pay their fare to Le Trou-du-Nord.

³There are no less than four **bòs Iram** in the novels of Carrié Paultre, and all are cabinet-makers. (The author was surprised when I informed him of this!)

⁴As a final touch of irony, the very money Liben had been saving for what he most desired, to be reunited with Selyaniz, is instead used to bury him.

⁵Contrast this attitude of sympathy and respect with the one shown in the opening Chapter. The narrator has achieved his desired effect.

⁶In Haitian belief an adult caught in the rain will get sick; in Haitian literature it is a certainty.

⁷Cf. the proverb: “**Wè pa wè, lantèman pou katrè.**” “Whether you see it or not, the burial is for four o’clock;” i.e., whatever we do, we cannot escape our fate. Funerals usually take place in Haiti at four p.m.; note also the rhyme **wè** / **katrè**, a not infrequent characteristic of Haitian proverbs.

KÈSYON

Reponn an kreyòl:

Koze sou Liv la

1. Lè man Racine pale de tonton Liben, poukisa li di konsa: “Nou kwè se yon moun nou kontre kèk kote deja”?
2. Poukisa man Racine di yo bezwen anpil moun ki ekri istwa an kreyòl?
3. Selon man Racine, kilès sèl jan pou wete pèp la nan twou kote li ye a?

Chapit 1 - Yon Veye

1. Poukisa gen sitèlman moun k ap vini nan veye tonton Liben an?
2. Kisa tonton Liben te konn fè chak jou?
3. Epi bòs Dò, ki moun li ye?
4. Poukisa ti mesye yo ta vle bòs Dò “vin kraze kèk lodyans” ak yo?
5. Kisa ti granmoun lan vle bòs Dò di yo?

Chapit 2 - Yon Gwo Jenn Ti Gason

1. Granpapa Liben, ki moun li te ye?
2. Poukisa yo di manman Liben bwòdè anpil?
3. Epi ki moun ki te papa Liben?
4. Poukisa yo pa te twò prese mete Liben lekòl?
5. Lè Liben pa te ka ale lekòl Senmak, kisa yo te fè pou ba li leson?

Chapit 3 - Ki Metye?

- 1. Kisa moun di lè granpapa Liben mouri?**
- 2. Poukisa Anemiz vle Liben aprann tayè?**
- 3. Poukisa yo di: “Peyi a te nan yon pakèt boulvès”?**
- 4. Yon jou maten, kisa Liben tandè gwo bòs nan atelye a di?**
- 5. Epi depi jou sa a, kisa Liben gen nan tèt li?**

Chapit 4 - Jandam!

- 1. Lè Liben ak manman l rive lavil, poukisa yo sezi?**
- 2. Nan aswè, kisa Anemiz te kwit?**
- 3. Lè Anemiz pale de jandam yo ak pitit li, poukisa li sezi tandè kalite gwo koze sa a?**
- 4. Poukisa Anemiz kwè li pa ka mete l nan jandam?**
- 5. Nan denmen, kisa mèt boutik la di lè l tandè se jandam Liben vle fè?**

Chapit 5 - Yon Bèl Bèl Ti Madmwazèl

- 1. Poukisa premye sèjan an ap mande pou Liben?**
- 2. Depi konben tan Liben deja nan Gad la?**
- 3. Poukisa li tris kounyeya?**
- 4. Kijan li fè pou rive Otvou?**
- 5. Kisa manman l te toujou fè chak lanne vè jou sis janvyè?**
- 6. Kijan Liben fè konesans Selyaniz?**

Chapit 6 - Yon Bon Maryaj

- 1. Ki moun ki nan fanmi frè Nondye a?**
- 2. Depi Liben t ap frekante moun sa yo, kijan tout bagay te chanje nèt pou li?**

3. Kilè Liben ekri yon lèt voye bay moun li yo nan Wobyon?
4. Lè Liben marye ak Selyaniz, ki kalite lavi yo mennen ansanm?
5. Sa Selyaniz gen lide fè pandan vakans Liben an?
6. Depi konben tan Liben pa wè manman l'?

Chapit 7 - Chèf Seksyon

1. Kijan Anemiz ap bat kò l anvan moun li yo rive lakay li?
2. Ki kalite fèt moun Wobyon fè pou resevwa Liben?
3. Si Liben ak madanm li vini rete Wobyon, kisa Liben ta fè pou l viv?
4. Epi Selyaniz menm, kisa li ta ka fè?
5. Kote yo ta ka rete Wobyon?
6. Pita, konben pitit yo genyen?
7. Kisa timoun yo ap fè?
8. Poukisa yo kase Liben nan travay chèf seksyon an?

Chapit 8 - Kòmès ak Travay Jaden

1. Lè Liben pèdi djòb li, ki moun ki ede l'?
2. Epi Liben menm, kisa l ap fè kounye a?
3. Poukisa timoun yo yon ti jan meprize tout travay ki fèt ak men?
4. Kisa ki rive Pòtoprens apre vakans la?
5. Lè Liben pran nouvel bagay la, kisa li fè toptop?

Chapit 9 - Menm Antwàn nan Gonmye...

1. Kisa grannèg lavil la pote lè l te ale Wobyon?
2. Kisa li gen lide fè pou Wobyon?

3. Poukisa Anemiz ak Liben vle kandida sa a pase?
4. Men kisa ki rive yon senmenn anvan eleksyon fèt?
5. Poukisa apre sa, Anemiz menm pa t gen bouch pou pale?
6. Nan fanmi Liben an, ki moun ki pèdi plis?
7. Poukisa?

Chapit 10 - Siklòn Azèl

1. Poukisa Anemiz te mouri?
2. Kisa tout fanmi an ap fè pou jwenn kòb kounyeya?
3. Kisa Liben di lè Selyaniz mande l poukisa li lage kò l konsa?
4. Poukisa yo pa vle dènye ti gason an rete lekòl?
5. Kisa ki rive nan Wobyon lè siklòn Azèl te vini?

Chapit 11 - Rantre nan Boukannen Dlo

1. Apre siklòn lan, kisa yo te fè pou grangou pa t touye yo andeyò a?
2. Epi kisa k ap rive kounyeya nan peyi a?
3. Poukisa Liben te pè tounen nan koze eleksyon?
4. Poukisa gen moun ki pa renmen Liben?
5. Ou kwè li gen rezon jou eleksyon an?

Chapit 12 - Yon Ti Kwi Kribich

1. Poukisa Selyaniz kapab achte kwi kribich?
2. Kisa gwo fanm woujat la ap fè?
3. Epi de (2) sekretè li yo, kisa yo fè?
4. Poukisa yo te mennen Selyaniz nan pòs la?
5. Sa k rive nan chemen an, lè yo tounen lakay?
6. Poukisa Liben vle madanm li ale nan Nò wè moun li yo?

Chapit 13 - Lage nan Lavi a

- 1. Poukisa Liben vann bourik li a?**
- 2. Kote premye pitit gason li a ye kounyeya?**
- 3. Poukisa?**
- 4. Epi pitit fi li a, kote li ye kounyeya?**
- 5. Poukisa madmwazèl la blije kite lavil?**

Chapit 14 - Anba Mapou a

- 1. Poukisa yo fèmen Liben nan prizon?**
- 2. Lè l tounen Wobyon apre l sòti nan prizon, sa l jwenn?**
- 3. Kijan Liben rive jwenn vye zanmi l bòs Dò?**
- 4. Kisa ki te nan lèt Selyaniz te voye ba li a?**
- 5. Kijan bòs Dò ak Liben mete tèt ansanm kounyeya?**

Chapit 15 - Nan Limyè yon Vye Fannal

- 1. Kijan Liben pase jounen an kounyeya?**
- 2. Kisa Liben fè nan dòmi?**
- 3. Kote li ta vle ale?**
- 4. Kijan Liben mouri?**
- 5. Moun k ap koute bòs Dò, èske yo respekte Liben kounyeya?**
- 6. Poukisa?**

SYNOPSES

Since it is likely that this text will be used in places far removed from Haiti or the few foreign universities offering courses in Haitian, synopses are included as an additional study aid. A word of warning, however: reading ahead here can dispel much of the story's interest!

Chapter 1 - A Funeral Wake

In spite of a chilly, rainy night, a crowd gathers for the wake of "Uncle" Liben, a humble old bridlemaker who used to sell his wares by the roadside. A group of young men taunts Liben's best friend Dò by making fun of the dead man, until an old woman watching nearby urges Dò to tell them just who Liben really was. [The stage is now set for the traditional Haitian story-teller.]

Chapter 2 - A Strapping Young Lad

Here begins the flashback which continues throughout the story. Contrary to appearances, Liben had been a person of some importance. His grandfather, a wealthy peasant, owned much land near Robion. Anemiz, his mother, had been to school in Saint-Marc where she learned to speak French. Liben's father, Kanmnè, was an army commander from Port-au-Prince stationed briefly at Robion. A whirlwind romance, followed by the departure of Kanmnè's unit, left Anemiz pregnant. Family resentment against Anemiz subsided once Liben was born. Later, when Liben was about to be sent off to school in Saint-Marc, a revolt broke out. Thus, he was obliged simply to take lessons from an old shoemaker some two hours ride from Robion.

Chapter 3 - What to do for a Living?

Liben's grandfather is suddenly taken ill and dies - in spite of care from the local Voodoo priestess. Anemiz is cheated out of her inheritance and left with almost nothing. She stops Liben's lessons and has him study to be a tailor. Meanwhile, civil disturbances grow worse, with one president rapidly succeeding another. Word spreads that foreigners have taken over the country. After order is

restored, Anemiz goes into the pork business to support Liben and herself. One day Liben overhears the head-tailor discussing the advantages of going into the newly formed Guard, and this becomes his secret goal.

Chapter 4 - Soldiers!

From time to time Anemiz and Liben go to Saint-Marc to a friend's store. One Friday upon arriving they are surprised to see many people lined up on both sides of the road watching a group of soldiers drill. A big white man paces and calls out orders; Liben is mesmerized. That evening Liben and Anemiz discuss their views on the military, and Liben confesses his desire to join. Anemiz sees no way for a poor woman's son to enter, but the next day their shopkeeper friend offers to use his influence.

Chapter 5 - A Very Good-Looking Young Lady

Six months after Liben's enlistment, he suddenly receives an order to prepare to leave for the garrison in Le Trou, far away in the North of Haiti. The very next day he finds himself in Cape Haitian, and then is off for Le Trou. Once settled there, he becomes friends with another young recruit who shares his taste for cock-fighting, drinking, and women. One afternoon the two are at the river where the townspeople wash, bathe and drink, when a tantalizing young woman passes by. Liben is transfixed, and thus he meets Selyaniz.

Chapter 6 - A Good Marriage

The more Liben comes to know Selyaniz, the more he appreciates her. Her mother has rheumatism, so Selyaniz has to take care of the house as well as of her younger brother and sister. One day Liben sees her at the market and helps carry her things home. Thereby, he inadvertently meets her father and the whole Nondye family. Getting to know this good Protestant family changes his lifestyle completely, and soon he marries Selyaniz. She is a good, faithful wife, just as Liben is a dutiful husband. After three years, Selyaniz suggests to her husband, now promoted to corporal, that he takes a month's leave and they go to visit his mother who has never met her daughter-in-law or grandson.

Chapter 7 - Police Chief

Anemiz works feverishly to fix up the house and yard. When the great day arrives, they all make a triumphant entrance into Robion. The couple uses their vacation to swim and visit friends, and Selyaniz decides she would like to live in Robion. Anemiz offers them her big three-room house, and she will build another for herself. Her friend the storekeeper could arrange for Liben to become the local chief of police, while Selyaniz could have a small business of her own. Liben gladly accepts.

Time passes. Liben is chief of police, the couple has a daughter and another son; already the two older children are in school. However, one day men from the national anti-Voodoo campaign come to Robion and destroy the temple belonging to an important person from Saint-Marc. Liben's deputies are implicated, and the temple's owner has Liben fired.

Chapter 8 - Commerce and Farming

Liben loses both status and income, but fortunately his wife and mother are there to help him pull through. The two women work well together, with Anemiz selling salt pork, while Selyaniz bakes and also sells various small goods. Liben himself is far from idle, taking good care of his cows and selling their milk. In addition, he leases land and farms it well, while doing some speculation in corn. Though not wealthy, the family lacks for nothing. The two older children have completed elementary school and are able to continue their education in Saint-Marc, though unfortunately they come to look down on any form of manual labor.

After Christmas vacation the children return to school, but when a revolt in Port-au-Prince leads to serious disturbances, Liben hurries to town to bring the children home.

Chapter 9 - Even a Legendary Seer...

Elections are in the offing. Anemiz' storekeeper friend comes to Robion passing out rum, cigarettes and small change - and campaign promises - while leaving more money for Anemiz to distribute.

She is certain that if he wins, Liben will once again become chief of police and the children can even be sent to school in the capital. The family throws itself body and soul into the campaign, with the children dropping out of school to help. Selyaniz alone has doubts. But one day the candidate is called to Port-au-Prince, and upon his return announces he is withdrawing from the race. The family is ruined, having sold almost everything in their efforts to get him elected. The children cannot even return to school. Fortunately, Selyaniz saves the situation by getting a bit of money from her family in the North.

Chapter 10 - Hurricane Hazel

Promising himself never again to become involved in politics, Liben begins to rebuild his life, but for Anemiz despair over the campaign is too great, and she dies. The two older children find work in the city, and lose contact with the family. With only the youngest left, the house is sad and empty. Liben and Selyaniz blame too much education for having ruined the two older children and take the youngest out of school to work beside Liben in the fields. Selyaniz takes up Anemiz' pork business, and Liben deals in coffee beans.

Then, for two days and nights the winds and rain wreak havoc. The house fills with water, while Liben and his family wait in darkness. Hurricane Hazel devastates all.

Chapter 11 - Reduced to Meaningless Activity

Selyaniz's pork business is ruined, as is Liben's coffee trade. From this moment on, Liben's life will be one of simply marking time. He is able, however, to buy a little wicker, and the three set about weaving straw bags and mats to stay alive.

The political situation is again unsettled, and money is hard to come by. Another election is approaching, but Liben keeps his distance from politics. He believes he is being prudent by not voting, but old enemies from his days as chief of police are watching and can use this as a weapon against him.

Chapter 12 - A Little Dish of Crayfish

One day Selyaniz goes into town and sells her saddle cushions for more than expected. As she bargains for some crayfish, a woman comes up from behind and claims the crayfish for herself. When Selyaniz protests, the woman replies that obviously Selyaniz doesn't know who she is, and has her two bodyguards beat the poor woman badly. As Selyaniz is being jailed, someone remarks that Liben is the one who should be put away. Later Liben rushes in to find his wife charged with showing lack of respect for an official. The penalty: a 50-gourde (\$10) fine. Liben finally raises the money, but on his way home with Selyaniz the neighbors hurriedly close their doors as they pass. Later, as he rubs oil on his wife's wounds, Liben suggests that she and the boy best get away to the North.

Chapter 13 - Out to Pasture

Out of desperation, Liben sells his donkey so that his wife and son can leave. It is a sad moment when he must say goodbye and put them on the bus. While in town he discovers that his older son has fled to Nassau after his employer was arrested, and that his daughter has sought refuge in Port-au-Prince after refusing the attentions of a local official. As Liben heads back to Robion, he feels he has very little left.

Chapter 14 - Under the Ceiba Tree

Liben's distant cousin comes to Robion with a deed for the land on which Liben's house stands and demands that Liben leave. Liben refuses. Consequently, he is beaten and put into prison. When finally released, he makes his way back to Robion only to find that some wealthy man has built a week-end retreat for himself where his house used to be.

With nothing left, Liben is found by his old friend Dò. He tells Liben that a letter from Selyaniz came the year before, saying things were desperate in the North and she would like to return. The two friends join forces: Dò sells sugar-cane and Liben sisal harnesses by the roadside.

Chapter 15 - By the Light of an Old Lantern

Liben and Dò settle into a routine. In the morning Liben helps Dò clean up the church courtyard where they share a little house. During the day they sell their wares by the road and return in the evening to cook supper and go to bed early. In his sleep Liben talks about Selyaniz and the children. He has saved 80 gourdes (\$16) to see his wife - but now 60 of these must be spent for his casket.

The narrator, Dò, returns to the present. He has no money to buy rum for the wake, and the hecklers, now thoroughly sympathetic, offer to contribute. Dò describes Liben's death: the old man, caught in the rain, developed a fever, became delirious, and died.

As dawn approaches, Liben's coffin is sealed.

GRAMMAR REMINDERS

It is assumed here that the student will have already completed one of the several Haitian grammars available. Thus the following REMINDERS are intended as an additional aid in understanding the present text, rather than as a comprehensive grammar of the language.

GRAMMAR REMINDER 1: POSITION OF “THE”

“The” comes after the noun, as well as after any word or phrase modifying the noun:

jennonm ki t ap travay ak li a (page 75/line 17) *the* young man who was working with him

pitit fi l la (75/21) his daughter (literally: *the* his daughter)

lòt moun k ap ekri yo (xviii/9) *the* other persons who are writing

GRAMMAR REMINDER 2: FORM OF “THE” (a, la, an, lan)

Although there is no gender in Haitian, “the” has four different forms, depending on the ending of the word immediately preceding it. This is sometimes called the ‘mirror principle’ whereby:

2a. **a** a vowel ending is followed by the vowel “a”:

andeyò a (56/1) *the* country, rural area

lakou a (44/7) *the* yard

2b. **la** a consonant ending is followed by the consonant form “la”:

sèkèy la (88/14) *the* coffin
do l la (63/6) (*the*) his back

2c. **an** a nasal ending is followed by the nasal form “an”:

fanm Liben an (70/2) *the* wife of Liben
chèf seksyon an (40/24) *the* rural police chief

an is also used following words ending in **-mi, -mou, -ni, -nou**:

zanmi an (29/13) *the* friend
lanne k ap vini an (46/8) *the* coming year

2d. **lan** an ending in **m** (always pronounced) or in **n** (when pronounced, i.e., when not forming one of the three nasal sounds: **-an, -en, -on**) is followed by “**lan**”:

madanm lan (86/18) *the* wife
kazèn lan (25/2) *the* military headquarters
mòn lan (88/2) *the* hill, the small mountain
granmoun lan (8/7) *the* old man
sa yo fin aprann lan (xviii/15) what they’ve finally learned
(literally: *the* that they have finished learning)

2e. However, the plural of “the” is always **yo** - whatever the sound of the preceding word:

fanmi Anemiz yo fè l pwosè, yo pran tout tè yo nan men l
(14/27) *The* members of Anemiz’ family took her to court,
they took all *the* lands in her possession

GRAMMAR REMINDER 3: VERB TENSES are expressed in one of five ways. The verb itself never changes (except as in contractions - see GRAMMAR REMINDER 7e): 3a. Verb alone = present tense, or past tense:

3a. Verb alone = present tense, **or** past tense:

gen moun ki pa gen chans nan lavi a (13/1) there *are* people who *don't have* any luck in life

Nan dimanch maten, lè m wè l pa leve, mwen mande l sa l genyen. (87/24) On Sunday morning, when I *saw* he *wasn't* up, I *asked* him what *was* wrong.

3b. **ap** = present progressive (“-ing”), or immediate future:

m wè tonton an ap travay (87/15) I saw the old man *working*

depi kandida a pase, tout moun ap bon (51/21) when the candidate gets in, everybody *will have* it (literally: *will be*) good

3c. **te** = past:

li te fè zanmi ak yon jenn rekri ki te gen menm laj (28/9) he *made* friends with a young recruit who *was* of the same age

3d. **va, a** = future:

Bondye va ede ou (82/16) God *will* help you
lè jennonm lan a fin pare, l a degaje l achte yon machin a koud pou li. (15/11) when the young man *will* really *be* ready, *she will* manage to buy a sewing machine for him.

3e. **ta** = conditional (“would” form):

m ta kapab mande yon pèmi pou m ale Wobyon, epi lè m tounen, m ta renouvle kontra m. (35/17) I *would* be able to ask for a leave in order to go to Robion and then when I return *would* re-enlist (renew my contract).

GRAMMAR REMINDER 4: TO BE is expressed in one of three ways:

4a. **Omitted** (though one of the four tense indicators listed in

GRAMMAR REMINDER 3 may be used):

Bagay gate wi lavil la (63/14) the situation *is* really fouled up in the city

M pa wè sa k ta fè pou m pa viv avè l. (39/4) I don't see what there *would be* to make me not live with her.

4b. **se**, occurring at the beginning of a sentence or clause:

Se nan sitirasyon sa a Liben te tonbe. (80/3) That *was* the situation in which Liben had fallen.

Yo di konsa se sou tout peyi a nèt kalamite sa a tonbe. (59/6) The story *was* (literally: They said thus) that this calamity had occurred throughout the entire country.

4c. **ye**, occurring at the end of a sentence or clause:

nou pa ka konn ki moun tonton Liben te ye (3/22) you (all) can't know who "Uncle" Liben *was*

GRAMMAR REMINDER 5: **fè** + verb - to have someone else do something, to have done:

Li te fè rekouvri kay kote l fè manje a. (38/1) She *had* the structure where she did the cooking *re-roofed*.

yo fè konnen blan yo t ap chache jenn gason solid (16/9) they *let it be known* that the foreigners were looking for strong young men

GRAMMAR REMINDER 6: POSSESSIVE is indicated in one of two ways:

6a. by placing the person or thing possessed in front of the possessor:

nan lakou bòs Iram lan (87/4) in the yard of "bòs" Iram

Se toutan l ap nonmen non Selyaniz ak timoun yo. (86/14)
He kept calling the *name of Selyaniz and of the children.*

- 6b. by placing **pa** before a pronoun or noun (cf. French *part*: share, portion):

Selyaniz menm sou bò pa l pa t manke degaje l (57/6)
Selyaniz herself on *her* side didn't fail to be successful

yo t ap tann jou pa yo rive (64/20) they were waiting for *their* day to arrive

lavi nonm lan sanble ak pa anpil lòt Ayisyen (xvii/16) the man's life resembles *that of* many other Haitians

- 6c. Be careful not to confuse the possessive **pa** with:

pa not (cf. French *ne... pas*: not)

pa step (cf. French *pas*: step)

pa by, through (cf. French *par*: by, through)

Paske Liben pa t fè yon pa jou dimanch sa a (65/2) Because Liben did *not* take a *step* that Sunday

Si pa malè pou nou, kandida a pa pase (52/4) If *by* misfortune for us, the candidate does *not* get elected

GRAMMAR REMINDER 7: CONTRACTIONS are quite frequent in Haitian, just as in English:

- 7a. The progressive indicator **ap** often occurs in combination:

mwen + ap = m ap:

m ap fè ou peye sa chè (76/18) *I'll* make you pay for that dearly

li + ap = l ap:

l ap fè yo bati yon gwo kay (50/22) *he was going to have them build a big building*

nou + ap = n ap:

Kanta pou bon n ap bon! (52/7) *We'll really have it made!*

yo + ap = y ap:

dènye moun di se pou depite sa a y ap vote (51/1) *every last person said it was for that deputy they were voting*

te (past indicator) + ap = t ap:

li t ap tape lèt (26/4) *he was typing letters*

pa (negative indicator) + ap = p ap:

Se pou n bat avè l pou n wè si l p ap sove. (56/23) *We must struggle along with him to see if he can't be saved.*

ki + ap = k ap:

yo pa ta janm konprann lanne k ap vini an (46/8) *they never would have believed that the year which was coming*

7b. **pa (negative indicator) + te (past indicator) = pa t:**

gen yon moun nan kay la ki pa t dakò menm nan koze a (52/1) *there was one person in the house who was not at all in agreement on the subject*

7c. The personal pronoun contractions **m**, **l**, **n**, and **y** can occur in combination with the future indicator **a**: **m a**, **l a**, **n a**, and **y a**:

m a fè ou fè konesans avè l. (33/14) *I'll have you meet him.*

Kò se zèb, l a pouse ankò. (73/1) *The [human] body is [like] grass, it'll grow back again.*

7d. **sa (that, what) + ki (who, which, what) = sa k:**

Sèlman men sa k rive. (32/10) Only here's *what (that which)* happened.

7e. Some commonly used verbs have a contracted form as well, such as:

ale = al:

ki moun k ap desann lavil al vote (64/23) who was going down into town *to go* vote

fini = fin:

Apre yo fin pase tout moun yon bon razad kleren (50/13)
After they *finished* passing around to everyone a good glassful of raw rum

Liben te fin bliye tout vye istwa (64/16) Liben had *completely* forgotten all the old stories

genyen = gen:

Te gen yon lòt tonton yo te rele bòs Dò (2/15) *There was* another old man they called "Boss" Dò

prale = pral:

se lanmò sèl ki pral sove l anba malè (65/3) it was death alone which *was going* to rescue him from misfortune

vini = vin:

pou mande abitan al enskri pou vin vote pou li (49/6) to ask the peasants to go register in order to *come* vote for him

Se pou rezon sa a kay la te vin tris. (56/20) It was for that reason the house became sad.

GRAMMAR REMINDER 8: The INDIRECT OBJECT always PRECEDES the direct object:

Rès lajan an, li renmèt mwen li (86/24) The rest of the money, he gave *it to me*.

Se vre, Anemiz te dwe kapab bay *piti* la ti leson. (10/24)
It's true Anemiz should have been able to give *elementary lessons to the child*.

Sa te fè yo twa (3) *piti*. (40/5) That made *three children for them*.

GRAMMAR REMINDER 9: REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS are expressed by:

9a. repeating the pronoun:

Pa pito *m* degaje *m* voye ou ansanm ak *piti* ou (71/7) why don't *I* arrange to send you together with your child

Se konsa Liben twouve *l* nan lari a (80/22) That was how Liben found himself in the street

9b. using **tèt** followed by the appropriate pronoun:

se li menm ki pou reskonsab *tèt li* (10/5) it is he who must be responsible for *himself*

nou mande *tèt nou* (xvii/14) we wonder (we ask *ourselves*)

9c. using **kò** (cf. French *corps*: body) followed by the appropriate pronoun:

Se nèg ki bat *kò l* anpil. (44/21) He was a man who tried hard (beat *his body* very much).

li chape *kò l* tou dousman (75/20) he slipped away very quietly

GRAMMAR REMINDER 10: **pou** is used in three different ways:

10a. to mean **for**:

Si pa malè pou nou (52/4) If by misfortune *for* us

10b. to mean **in order to**:

I al chita anba mapou a pou l travay (85/6) he went to sit under the ceiba tree *in order to* work

10c. to indicate necessity or obligation:

Se pou ou pran kouray. (82/15) You *must* take courage.

sèlman se jou vòt la pou l fè yo konnen pou ki moun pou yo vote. (52/14) only it was to be on the election day that he *was to* let them know for whom they *must* vote.

GRAMMAR REMINDER 11: A relatively frequent construction in the text is the one similar to **fini l fini** (85/4) as soon as he finished:

Rive Anemiz rive, li pase nan pòtay la (21/15) *As soon as Anemiz arrived*, she passed through the gate

“FALSE FRIENDS”

ase means not only *enough* (cf. French *assez*: enough), but also *only*:

Se pa tetyè ase non li te fè. (86/1) It was not *only* head harnesses he made.

kabann bed (do not confuse with French *cabane*: hut, shanty):

li moute kabann li (86/12) he got up into his *bed*.

kontwole to check (out):

Lè l fin kontwole si tout pòt fèmen (76/5) When she had finished *checking* if all the doors were closed

nèg m., **nègès** f. man, woman - regardless of race:

Se konsa nèg la mete lòd nan zafè l, epi l tou marye ak nègès la (33/24) Thus the *man* got his business in order, and immediately married the *woman*

ni... ni both... and (if used with **pa**: neither... nor):

Ni grann, ni manman, ni papa, yo te fè timoun yo kwè se lekòl ki tout. (45/26 - 46/2) *Both* the grandmother, the mother, *and* the father had made the children believe that school was everything.

nou *you plural*, as well as *we*:

ou kwè ti zagribay tankou nou ta kapab ap pase l nan betiz? (7/4) you think little punks like *you* would have been able to be making fun of him?

pa... ankò no longer (do not confuse with French *pas encore*: not yet):

lakou a pa gen kote pou kenbe dlo ankò. (58/10) the yard *no longer* had any place to hold (more) water.

sou on, upon (cf. French *sur*: on, upon); (**under** in Haitian is usually **anba**):

Sou yon bò te gen Selyaniz, madanm li. Sou lòt bò a te gen Anemiz, manman l. (44/1) *On* one side there was his wife Selyaniz. *On* the other side was his mother Anemiz.

vakabon scoundrel, bum (considerably stronger than “vagabond” in English):

Se pa yon bank vakabon m ap moute. (87/5) It’s not a bunch of *bums* I’m getting together.

PROBLEM PAIRS

Beware of similar words with different meanings:

lèt milk vs. **lèt** letter

Li toujou gen de (2) twa (3) bèf pou l tire, epi pou l voye lèt vann lavil. (44/22) He always had two or three cows to milk, and then sent the *milk* to be sold in town.

Men pèsonn pa t vle pran lèt la. (82/3) But no one wanted to take the *letter*.

pè to fear, be afraid; fear vs. **pe** to be quiet, shut up

genlè ou pa pè yo (22/8) it seems you're not *afraid of* them

Lè Anemiz tande koze sa a, li pe koup. (24/5) When Anemiz heard that talk, she suddenly *shut up*.

se is, it is, was, it was vs. **sè** sister

se frè ak sè ki pou vin ede ou (87/8) *it is* the brothers and *sisters* who must come help you

ta conditional tense indicator vs. **ta** late (cf. French *tard*: late)

si ou te vle kite Gad la, men sa l ta fè (39/17) if you wanted to get out of the Guard, here is what she *would* do

Se jouk byen ta, lè madanm vin ap pote yon pitit (34/1) it was (not) until quite *late*, when (his) wife came to be bearing a child

te past tense indicator vs. **te** tea vs. **tè** land

Papye tè ki te garanti anplasman kote kay li te bati a, pa t nan men l. (80/3) The deed (*land* paper) which guaranteed the location where his house *was* build was not in his possession.

yo bouyi yon te ba l bwè (14/4) they boiled some *tea* for him to drink

Proverbs in Text

Proverbs form the very backbone of Haitian discourse. Carrié Paultre makes ample use in Tonton Liben of this font of wisdom:

Lè ou wè zo sou gran chemen, konnen li te gen vyann anwo l.
(page 1, line 1)

Mapou tonbe, kabrit manje fèy li. (page 7, line 1)

Ou pa mare pye lanmò. (page 13, line 6)

Se pa tout kote ou rive ou kapab fè bak. (page 33, line 16)

Bon regleman fè bon zanmi. (page 44, line 17)

Chat chode nan dlo cho, kou l wè dlo frèt, li kouri. (page 64, line 7)

Bay kou bliye, pote mak chonje. (page 64, line 15)

Si m te konnen toujou dèyè. (page 65, line 1)

Kò se zèb, l a pouse ankò. (page 73, line 1)

Lavi malere se mistè. (page 85, line 1)

Wè pa wè, lantèman pou katrè. (page 88, line 17)

GLOSSARY

A

a the (*see Grammar Reminder 2a*); future indicator (*see Grammar Reminder 3d*); *see ala*; **machin a ekri**; **machin a koud**; **sa**

abitan peasant, farmer

abiye to dress

abiye an jandam dressed like a soldier

achte to buy

adye oh!, my!, what a pity!

afè business

ak with; and; to

akonpaye to accompany

akoupi to crouch, squat

al *see ale*

ala! what a...!, imagine....!

ale, al to go, leave (*see Grammar Reminder 7e*)

alèkile nowadays

alewè let alone, much less, not to mention

alèz easily, comfortably

alimèt match

amann fine, penalty

ameriken American

an the (*see Grammar Reminder 2c*); in; *see anfòm*

anba under, beneath, below; from; *see tèt anba*

anbeli clearing up (of weather)

andedan inside

andeyò country(side), rural area, backwoods, hills, "sticks"; in the country

anfòm in shape, in great shape

angle English

ankò again, still, yet, all the more

pa... ankò no longer

ankourajman encouragement

anmenmtan at the same time

anpil much, many

anplasman building site, location

anplis in addition

ansanm together, with

antere to bury

antravè sideways

antre to enter; to put inside

anvan before

anvayi to invade

anvi to feel like, want

anvlòp envelope

anwo on, upon

anyen nothing

ap *present progressive indicator, in English: "-ing" (see Grammar Reminder 3b)*

apa isn't it that, if it isn't, why not; separate, apart from

apantè surveyor

apiye to support, back, lean on

aprann to learn

apre after

apremidi afternoon

apye on foot

arebò beside, on the side of

ase enough; only

aswè evening, in the evening
aswè a tonight

atansyon! watch out!

atè on the ground; *see pye atè*

atè miyò cheap sleeping-mat

atelye workshop
avè with
avril April
ayè yesterday
ayisyen Haitian
Azèl Hazel

B

ba low; *see* **bay**
bab beard
babay bye-bye, good-bye
baboujèt young ignoramus
bagay thing; situation
bak *see* **fè bak**, **pa bak**
bal dance
balans scale, balance
bale to sweep
balize to break (sun at dawn)
ban bench; *see* **bay**
bank group, bunch
bann band, group; a lot of
bannann plantain
bare to meet up with, run into,
 find
basinen to rub lightly
basrak land near bottom of
 ravine
bat to beat; to fight, struggle
 bat je to blink
 bat kò to try, make an effort
bata *see* **monben bata**
batay battle
bati to build
batman beating
baton stick; *see* **je baton**
batri Voodoo charms or spells
bay, ba, ban to give; for
 bay sou to look out over
bayè gate
Bayè Boutèy Barrière
Bouteille

bèf cow
bèf chenn helper on a truck
bèl fine, beautiful
bèlmè mother-in-law
benefis profit
beny ritual bath
benyen to bathe, be bathed
bese to lower
bèt animal
betiz nonsense, kidding; *see*
 pase nan betiz
betize to work for nothing; to
 joke
bezwen need; to need
biswit roll (bread)
bitasyon farm, land holding;
 community
biwo desk
blan, blanch white (color or
 person); foreigner; empty
blanchi whitened, bleached,
 whitewashed
blayi to spread out
blaze faded
blije to be obliged, be forced
bliye to forget
blòk (cinder, cement) block
bò beside, upon; around, near;
 side
bòl bowl
bon good, fine; *see* **toutbon**
Bondye God
bonè early
bonjou good-day, hello
bonkou much, many
bonm kettle
bonswa good afternoon, good
 evening
bòs *title of respect for an artisan*
bouch mouth
bouche to stop up, shut up, close
bouda bottom, base (*familiar*)

term)

boujon bud
bouk village
boukannen to barbecue, roast
boule to burn
boulvès difficulties
boure to stuff
bourik donkey
bout end
 bout pou bout in the final analysis
boutèy bottle; *see Bayè Boutèy*
boutik shop
bouyay confusion
bouyi to boil
bouyon bouillon
bra arm
branch branch (tree, bush)
branka stretcher
brevè (senp) *equivalent of junior high school diploma, representing two years of successful study after elementary school graduation*
bri noise
briganday disorder
bwa wood
 ale bwa chat to die
bwadchenn oakwood
bwat box
bwaze to flee, clear out
bwè to drink
bwòdè cultured, “classy”; dressed up
byen quite, well

CH

chache to look for, get; to attempt
chagren sorrow

chaje to be troubled, burdened, upset; loaded down; *see tèt*
chaje
chak each
chal shawl
 anba chal in secret
chan song
chanje to change
chanm room, bedroom
chans luck
chante to sing; to crow; song
chape to escape
 chape kò to escape, clear out, slip away
chapit chapter
chaplè rosary, string
chaplèt club (weapon)
chapo hat
chat cat
chavire to capsize, turn over; *see kase chavire*
chay load
chè expensive; dearly
cheche to dry
chèf chief, leader, boss
 chèf seksyon rural police chief
chemen road, way, path
chemiz shirt
chemizèt undershirt
 chemizèt twa paman protective undershirt worn by many Voodooists (*see Chapter 5, Note 4*)
chen dog
chenn chain; *see bèf chenn*
 (bwa) chenn oak
chèz chair
chita to sit; seated; sitting
cho hot; bold; excited
chode to scald
chòdyè cooking-pot

chofe to heat
chofè driver
chonje to remember
chwal horse
chwazi to choose

D

dakò agreed, in agreement
dan tooth
danre food, (agricultural)
 produce
dans dance
dat date (calendar); *see pou dat*
Dayiti of Haiti
de two; some
debake to arrive; to leave for
debat to struggle
deblozay violent quarrel;
 upheaval
debyen honest
defen dead person, deceased
defèt to get rid of
dega damage
degad of the guard
degaje (*usually reflexive*) to
 manage, find a solution; to
 take advantage; to hurry
degouden one-half of a gourde
 (*formerly 10 cents U.S.*)
degrennen to break down into
deja already
dekonpoze to be flustered
dekontwole to unnerve, fluster
denmen tomorrow, next day
dènye last, every last
depans spending, expenditure
depanse to spend
depi since, from the time when;
 as soon as
depite deputy, representative
deplase to move, move off

depo storehouse
depoze to put down
deranje to disturb
derape to leave, hurry off
desann to go down, descend
desele to unsaddle
desen drawing, sketch
desèvis on duty
dèt debt
detaye to retail
devan in front of; before; front;
 see pran devan
dèyè behind, after
deyò outside
di to say, tell; hard, *see vle di*
dimanch Sunday
dis ten
diskite to discuss
disparèt to disappear
dizè ten o'clock
diznevyèm nineteenth
djòb job
dlo water; tear
do back
dòk doc
dòmì to sleep; sleep
domino dominoes (*game*)
donmaj shame, pity
donnen to yield (of crops)
dòtwa barracks
doulè pain
doumbreyè dumpling
dousman slowly
douvan before
 douvan jou daybreak
dra sheet
drese to dish out (food); to draw
 up
dwa right
dwat straight
 tou dwat straight ahead
dwe to owe; must, should

dwèt finger

E

e and

ebenìs cabinet-maker

ede to help

edmi and a half

egare intimidated

egzanp example

egzaminen to examine

egzèsis exercise, drill

ekri to write; *see machin a ekri*

eleksyon election

elèv student

elve to raise

Endistriyèl Industrial

enpe a little

enskri to register, enroll

enstiti institute

enteresan interesting

epi and, and then, and also

epitou and also

eskandal noise, uproar

espekilatè speculator

espere to hope

esplike to explain

etajè shelf

etid study

etidye to study

F

faksyonnè sentry

fanm woman

fanmi family

fann to push along

fannal lantern

farin flour

fatra trash, garbage

fè to do, make (*see Grammar*

Reminder 5)

fè bak to turn around; to go
back, retreat

fè kwa to swear

fèblantye tinsmith

fèk to have just

fèmal ache

fèmen to close, enclose; to
corner, block

fen end

fènwa darkness

fèt celebration, party, holiday; to
be born; *variation of fè*

fete to celebrate

fèy leaf

fi girl, woman; *see pitit fi*

figi face

fimen to smoke

fini, fin to finish, end; to finally
do something (*see Grammar*
Reminder 7e)

fisèl string

fizi gun

fò strong; loud; great (part); *see*
fòk

fòk, fò it is necessary

fòm shape; *see anfòm*

fon deep, deeply

Fonbatis Fond-Baptiste

fondepouvwa attorney

fopanno saddle cushion

fòr four (*when mimicking*
English)

fòt fault, mistake

fou crazy; oven

foula scarf, kerchief

foure to put, stick

fourye quartermaster

frajil touchy

franchi to cross

franse French

fre fresh

frè brother

fredi cold, chill
frekan bold act
frekante to frequent
frèt cold
friksyonnen to massage, rub
fwa time (*instance*)
fwote to rub
fye to trust

G

gad prison guard; *see gade*
Gad Guard, army/police force of Haiti
gade, gad to look, look at; to keep, take care of; to concern
gagè cock-fighting arena; cock fighting
galèri porch, veranda
garanti to guarantee, assure
gason boy, man
gaspiye to waste, go to waste, 'die on the vine'
gate to spoil, ruin; spoiled, rotten
gayè to spread, scatter
gaz kerosene
gen *see genyen*
genlè apparently, it seems
gentan already
genyen, gen to have; to earn; there is, there are; to be *with expressions of age*; (*see Grammar Reminder 7e*)
gen lè to seem, look like
gen pou to have to, must
gen tan to have time
glasi cement slab
glise to slip, slide
gòj throat
gòl pole

Gonayiv Gonaïves
gonfle to swell; to spread out
Gonmye Gommier
goud gourde (*Haitian unit of currency, until 1980's worth 20 cents U.S.*)
gouden one-fourth of a gourde (*formerly worth 5 cents U.S.*)
gouvènman government
Gouyavye Gouayavier
govi pot (*Voodoo ritual vessel*)
grad rank
gran big, main
grandi to grow up
grangou hunger; hungry
granmè grandmother; granny
granmmaten dawn
granmoun adult; old person
granmtimaten dawn
grann grandmother, granny
grann igrann far in the past
grannèg big shot, VIP
granpapa grandfather
gran granpapa great grandfather
grate to scratch
grenn single unit; drop
gridap *see tèt gridap*
griyo spicy fried pork (*Haitian delicacy*)
gwo big, important
gwòg alcoholic drink
gwòs pregnant; *see pran*

I

igrann *see grann igrann*
inivèsite university
isit here
istwa story, incident
itil useful

J

jaden field; garden
Jakmèl Jacmel
jan way, manner; how
jandam policeman; soldier
janm never; leg
janvye January
je eye; *see* **bat je, voye je**
je baton beating
jefò effort
jen June
jeneral general
jenjanm ginger
jenn young
jennen to bother
jennès prostitute
jennonm young man
jeran caretaker
Jeremi Jérémie
jis just, exactly
fè jis pri to bargain
jòdi a today
se jòdi a long time ago
jou day; *see* **douvan jou**
jouk until; to, all the way to, as far as; off
jounen day
jouwoumou pumpkin
jwe to play
jwenn to find, get
jwèt game

K

k *see* **ki**
ka trouble; case, instance; *see* **kapab**
kabann bed
kabicha to nap; nap
kabrit goat
kache to hide

kachimbo clay pipe
kadav body
kadè quarter of an hour
kafè coffee
kafou crossroads
kako caco, guerrilla fighter
kal bit, piece
kalamite calamity
kalbas calabash, gourd
kale to peel
kalite kind, sort
kalkile to calculate
kamyon truck
kandelab cactus
kandida candidate
kanmarad comrade, buddy
kann sugar cane
kann zannanna especially sweet variety of sugar cane
Kannzas Kansas
kanpe to stand; standing
kanta as for
kantik hymn
kantite quantity
kanton district
kantonnen to be billeted, quartered
kapab, ka to be able, can, can be
kaporal corporal
kapòt roof of a truck
karako typical peasant dress with high waistline, long sleeves, and full skirt
karaktè personality
kare direct, straightforward; *see* **pa kare**
kase to break; to deplete; to fire, dismiss
kase chavire to take the direction (toward)
kat playing cards; voter's

registration card
katrè four o'clock
katreven eighty
katriyèm fourth; ninth grade in school
katye neighborhood, district, area; quarter
kay house, building, structure
kaye filled, congested
kazèn military headquarters
ke little bit
kè heart; courage
kè sere saddened heart
kèk several, some, a few
kenbe to get along; to hold
kenbe rèl to wail
kenèp Spanish lime tree
kenkay odds and ends, dry goods
kenz fifteen
kèsyon question
ki, k who, which, what
kifè thus, consequently
kijan how
kilè when
kilès which one
kim lather
kisa what
kite to let, allow, permit; to leave
kivèt wash basin
kizin kitchen
klas class
klere to light up; to polish
kleren raw rum
kloure to nail
kò body; *reflexive indicator (see Grammar Reminder 9c); see bat kò, chape kò*
kòb Haitian cent, or 1/100th of a gourde; money, cash
kochon pig

kòd rein
kòdonye shoemaker
kòk rooster
kokoye coconut (tree)
kole to stick; to put
kolik colic, abdominal cramps
kòm since; when; as, thus
kòmandan commander
kòmande to command; to order (goods)
kòmann order
kòmès business, commerce
kòmkidire as though
kon *see konm*
konbat to fight off, combat
konben how much
kondi to direct; to drive
konesans knowledge
fè konesans to meet, get to know
konfyans trust
konkou help, assistance
konm, kon as, like
konmanse to begin
konmè young woman
konn to be in the habit of, do something regularly; to happen; to know, be acquainted with; to know how
konnen to know, be acquainted with
konpayi company
konpè buddy, old friend, guy
konpliman compliment
konplo plot, conspiracy
konprann to understand
konsa like this, like that, thus; approximately, at that time
konsa konsa gradually, little by little; ordinary, everyday, run-of-the-mill

konsyans conscience
kont share; tale, story, account;
 enough; *see pou kont*
kontan happy
konte to count
kontinye to continue
kontra contract
kontre to meet, encounter
kontwa counter
kontwole to check
kòrèk correct, proper
kote side; where; place
kou when, as; blow (strike)
koub curve (on road)
kouche to go to bed; lying
 down; to set (sun)
koud to sew
koukou owl
koule to hang; to roll; to flow
koulin *see manchèt koulin*
kouman how
Kounòl Cournole
kounyeya now
koup quickly, suddenly
koupe to cut off, interrupt
kouran, kourant current, flow;
 course (of)
kouray (moral) strength, effort;
 courage
kouri to run, go fast; collective
 panic
kouri ak to arrest
kout bolt (of lightning)
koute to listen (to)
kouti seam
kouvri to cover
kouzen cousin
koze affair, concern, subject;
 talk, discussion
vye koze nonsense, bullshit
kras *see ti kras*
kraze to smash, break, destroy;

to chew; to mate; to really
 go at something; small
 amount
kredi on credit
kreyòl Creole
kribich crayfish
kwa cross
fè kwa to swear
kwè to believe, think
kwen corner
kwi calabash bowl
kwit to cook
kwoke to hang up

L

l *see li*
la the (*see Grammar Reminder*
 2b): there; then
laba over there
labouyi hot cereal
labrin dusk
Lachapèl La Chapelle
lacho lime (calcium oxide)
blanchi ak lacho
 whitewashed
ladan inside; in it, among them
ladesant descent; stay
lafimen smoke
lafyèy fever
lage to let go, go to pot; to let
 out (of school)
lage nan lavi to be done
 for, be put out to pasture
Lagonav La Gonâve
laj age
lajan money
lakay home
lakou compound, cluster of
 houses; yard
lalin moon
lame army

lamenm	immediately	lèt	letter; milk
lan	the (<i>see Grammar Reminder 2d</i>)	lete	summer
lang	language	levanjil	Protestant
lanjelis	church bell for devotions	Levanjil	Gospel
lanmen, men	hand	levasyon	upbringing
lanmò	death	leve	to get up, rise; to set up
lanne	year	leve pòs	to go off duty
lannwit	night	Lewa	Epiphany, Twelfth-Night (January 6)
lanp	lamp; <i>see tchwe lanp</i>	Lewo Senmak	area above Saint- Marc
lantèman	funeral, burial	lèzam	arms (warfare)
lantouray	fence	li, l	he, she, it; his, her, its; him, her; <i>reflexive pronoun</i> ; to read
lapawòl	word, remark	li menm	himself, herself, itself (<i>see Grammar Reminder 9a</i>)
lapenn	sorrow, sadness, pain	lib	free, freely
lapli	rain	libète	liberty
lapremye	(the) first	lide	idea; mind
lari	street	fè lide	to have the idea, think about
larivyè	river, stream	limen	to light
lasante	health	limyè	light
Lasous	La Source (a spring)	lise	high school
latanyen	palm wicker	lite	to struggle
Latibonit	Artibonite Plain or River	liv	book
latrin	latrine, toilet	lo	lot, bunch of
lavalas	torrential rain	lòd	order
lave	to wash	lodyans	story-telling session; talk, jokes, funny stories
laverite	truth	long	long
lavèy	the day before	longè	length
lavi	life	lonje	to stretch out
lavil	town, city; into town	lonn	bolt of cloth
le	the (<i>plural</i>)	lontan	long time, long time ago, for a long time
lè	time; when; on, every (day of the week)	lopital	hospital
gen lè	to seem, look like	lòt	another, other
menm lè a	right away	lote	to divide up, categorize
legliz	church	louvri	to open; open
lekòl	school		
lendi	Monday		
lepè	old man		
leson	lesson		
lestonmak	chest (of body)		

lwa Voodoo spirit
lwen far
lwil oil
lwil masketi castor oil
lyann bundle

M

m *see mwen*
machande to barter
machandiz merchandise
machann merchant
mache to walk; to march; to
succeed, go well; market
fè mache to shop
mache pa bak to march
backwards
machè my dear (*feminine*)
machin machine; sewing
machine; car
machin a ekri typewriter
machin a koud sewing
machine
machwè jaw
madanm wife; lady
madigra Mardi Gras
madmwazèl young lady
madras madras (*cotton fabric*
from India)
magazen store
mak scar, mark
makòn bundle (of ears of corn)
makout wicker basket
Tonton Makout familiar
name for member of the
militia or VSN (*Volontaires*
de La Sécurité Nationale)
mal badly; male
fè mal to hurt
malad sick
maladi sickness
malanga taro (potato family)

malè misfortune
malere poor, unfortunate; poor
person (without money)
malerèz poor, unfortunate
woman
malèt suitcase
malgre in spite of
malonèt insult, affront
fè malonèt to rebuke,
reproach
malsite total poverty; in a bad
way
man Mrs., Madam
manbo Voodoo priestess
manch handle; stick, pole
manchèt machete
manchèt koulin long,
narrow machete used for
cutting sugar cane
mande to ask, ask for
mangonmen to get worse
manje to eat; food; feast
manke to miss, fail; to lack
manman mother; maternal,
native
mannòk large leaf (tobacco)
manyè at least; more or less
mapou ceiba, silk-cotton tree
marasa sacred twins (Voodoo)
mare to tie, tighten up; to be
restricted; to get together; to
frown
mari husband
maryaj marriage
marye to get married; to join
together, combine
mas mask
masketi castor-oil plant; *see lwil*
masketi
maten morning
materyo material, goods;
construction materials

mati martyrdom
Matino Martineau
mawon to flee
mayi corn
me May
 me wi yes, of course
medam plural of **madanm**
mèkredi Wednesday
mele mixed
men but; here is; hand;
 possession; *see* **lanmen**
menaje to spare
menm even; same; self; *with*
 negative: at all; *see* **lè**
mennen to take, lead; to put
meprize to despise, look down
 on
merite to merit, deserve
mesaj message
mesye man, gentleman
mèt owner; may (*permission*)
 mèt magazen storekeeper
mete to put, put on; to start to
metye trade, profession
mezanmi! really!
 mezanmi o! wow!
mezi as much, as many; a lot; to
 size up; measure
michan difficulties of life
midi noon
milèt mule
militè military
militon squash
mistè mystery, secret;
 unimaginable
misyonè missionary
mitan middle
mitin meeting
miyò better; *see* **atè miyò**
mizè misery, poverty
mizerab poor, pitiful
moman moment

mòn hill, small mountain
monben bata bastard cedar
 (*tropical tree whose leaves*
 are used to make an infusion
 considered useful against
 flu, malaria etc.)
monchè my friend (*masculine*)
monnen change (money)
montre to show; to teach,
 instruct
moso piece
mouchwa handkerchief,
 headscarf
mouda base (*familiar term*)
moun person, people
mouri to die
moute to climb, go up to; to
 build; to set up; to mount a
 horse; to group
mouye to get wet; wet
move bad; angry
mwa month
mwatye half
mwèn, m I, my, me; *reflexive*
 pronoun (see Grammar
 Reminder 9a)

N

n *see* **nou**
nan in; at; on; from within;
 through
nanpwen there is no way
Naso Nassau, Bahamas
natif natal native
nèf new
nèg man, person; *see* **grannèg**
nègès woman
nènpòt whatever
nepe sword
nèt thoroughly, through and
 through, completely

netwaye to clean, clear
ni... ni both... and
nò north
Nò the North of Haiti
non no; name
nonm man
nonmen to name, call; to
 nominate
nou, n we, our, us; you (*pl.*),
 your (*pl.*); *reflexive pronoun*
 (see *Grammar Reminder 9a*)
nouvèl news; again
nouvo new
nwa black, dark; shadows
Nwèl Christmas
nwit night

O

o! oh!
ogadavou at attention
òganize to organize
Okap Cape Haitian
okazyon opportunity
okipe to take care of; to concern
 oneself with
opozisyon opposition
orevwa goodbye
osinon or, otherwise
Otwou (Le) Trou-du-Nord
ou you, your; *reflexive pronoun*
 (see *Grammar Reminder 9a*)
ounfò Voodoo temple complex
ozanj heaven, in heaven

P

p not (*short form*)
pa not; *possessive indicator* (see
Grammar Reminder 6b);
 step; by, through; share,

portion (see *Grammar
 Reminder 6c*)

pa... ankò no longer
pa bak backwards
pa kare single step
pa sa not that; wrong

pak pen, sty
pakèt packet, package, bundle;
 a lot of
pakoti cheaply made; cheaply-
 made clothing
pale to speak, talk
se pa pale it's beyond
 words

palmis, palm tree
paman see **chemizèt twa
 paman**

panche to lean, bend over
pandan while, during
pandye to hang
panno wall
pantalon pants, trousers
pantan to jump, be startled
panyen basket
papa father, papa; hey man!
papye paper

papye tè deed (for land)
pare to prepare; ready
parèt to appear
parèt tèt to make an
 appearance

pase to pass, go by; to spend; to
 happen; rather than, than,
 instead of; before; past, last
pase nan betiz to make fun
 of

paske because
pastè pastor, Protestant minister
patat sweet potato
pati to leave, part; part, section
patko not yet (*past tense*)
pawòl word; remark

pay	straw	plas	place, position
pe	to be quiet, shut up	plat	dish, plate
pè	to fear, be afraid; fear	plede	incessantly, to continually do (something), to keep on doing (something)
pèdi	to lose	plen	full; to fill
pèmi	leave	plenn	to complain
pen	bread	plezi	pleasure
penmèt	to allow, permit	plis	more
penpennen	to struggle	po	shell (coconut); bark (tree)
pèp	people	pòch	pocket; pack
perimèt	perimeter	Pòdepè	Port-de-Paix
pèsonn	no one, no body	poko	not yet
pete	to break out, burst out	pòpòz (kè pòpòz)	with mind or heart at ease
petèt	perhaps, maybe	pòs	post; military post; shop
pewòl	payroll	fè pos	to be on duty
peye	to pay, pay for	leve pòs	to go off duty
peyi	country, nation; <i>often used simply to refer to Haiti</i>	pòt	door
peze	to weigh	pòtay	gate, barrier
pi	more, most	pote	to carry, bring, bear
pifò	most	poto	pole, post
piga	don't!	Pòtoprens	Port-au-Prince
pijama	pajamas	pou	for; in order that; by; <i>to express necessity or obligation (see Grammar Reminder 10c); see gen pou</i>
pike	to pick out	pou dat	a long time
pikèt	peg, stake; clutches	pou kont	(<i>with pronoun</i>) alone
pile	to grind, crush, pound	poukisa	why
pip	pipe	poulen	colt, foal
pipirit	kingbird (<i>see Chapter 8, Note 3</i>)	pouse	to push, shove; to grow
pis	flea	poutèt	because of
piston	connections, "pull"	pouvwa	power
pit	sisal, sisal hemp (<i>fiber used for making rope etc.</i>)	pòz	rest
piti	little, small	poze	to place; to rest; to ask
piti piti	gradually	pozisyon	position
pitimi	millet	prale, pral	to be going to (<i>see Grammar Reminder 7e</i>)
pitit	child	pran	to take
pitit fi	daughter	pran devan	to go first, take
pitit gason	son		
pito	to prefer; rather, instead		
Pivè	Pivert		
piwèt	a little stroll		
plan	plan		

over

pran san (*plus pronoun*) to catch one's breath, relax

pran tèt to influence, persuade, convince

pran yon gwòs to become pregnant (*familiar expression*)

pratik regular customer

pre near

premye first; first born

prese to be in a hurry

prèske almost

pretann to claim

pretansyon ambition; lease, agreement

prete to lend, loan

prezidan president

pri price; *see jis*

priyè prayer

prizon prison

pwazon poison

pwoblèm problem

pwoche to approach, come nearer

pwofesè teacher

pwofite to profit from, take advantage of

pwogrè progress

pwomnad walk, stroll

pwonmennen to walk, stroll

pwòp clean; very well

pwosè legal case

fè pwosè to take to court

pwovèb proverb

pwovizyon food, provisions

pyas *familiar for gourde (formerly worth 20 cents U.S.)*

pye foot; *see apye, pyebwa*

de pye li nan yon sèl soulye helpless, useless

pye atè barefoot

pyebwa tree

pyès room

R

rad clothes

raje brush, bush, undergrowth

rak brush, scrub; *see basrak*

rakonte to tell, relate

rale to pull; to haggle over a price

ralfò straw bag

ranje to arrange, shift; to get comfortable

rankont meeting, encounter
fè rankont to run into (someone), encounter

ranmak hammock

ranmase to collect, gather up

rantre to enter, return

ranvèse to overthrow

ranyon rags

rapadou brown sugar

rapò report

rasanble to gather, gather up (one's resources, money etc.)

rasin root

rayi to hate

razad serving, glassful

rebò edge

recho charcoal grill

rèd hard, severe, difficult

redouble to increase, intensify

refè to recover, get well

refize to refuse

reflechi to reflect

regleman settling (of an account)

regretè to be sorry for, regret

rejete to suppress Voodoo

rekonèt to recognize, know; to
 catch one's breath (*reflexive*)
rekòt harvest
rekouvri to re-roof
rekri recruit
rèl cry, wail; *see kenbe rèl*
rele to call, call for; to be named
remake to notice
remoute to go up against
 remoute kouran to make a
 come-back
ren kidney; hip; belt
renmen to like, love
renmèt to give, give back, hand
 over, return (*something*)
renouvle to renew
rense to rinse
repare to repair
repete to repeat
reponn to answer, reply
reprann to get back, regain,
 retake
rès rest, remainder
resevwa to receive
resezi to catch oneself
resi to succeed
reskonsab to be responsible
 (for)
respè respect
respekte to respect
rete, ret to stay, remain; to stop;
 to be left with; to live,
 inhabit
retire to take out
rèv dream
revanj revenge
revann to resell
reve to dream
revenan ghost
revolisyon revolution
revòlvè revolver
rezen grape

rezon reason, cause
 gen rezon to be right
ri to laugh
rich rich
rigwaz large leather whip
rimatis rheumatism
riral rural
rive to arrive; to happen; to
 succeed; arrival
rizèz cunning, crafty

S

sa that, what; what?; the one,
 that person; *see kisa*
sa a this, that
sa yo these, those
sab sand
sak sack, bag
sal room
sale salted
sali salute
salon living-room
samdi Saturday
san without; one hundred;
 blood; *see pran san*
sanble to gather, assemble
 sanble ak to resemble
sang cinch, saddle-strap
sansib sensitive
santi to feel; to smell
santim centime, 1/100th of a
 gourde
sapat sandal
save knowledgeable, scholarly
savon soap
se is, it is (*see Grammar*
 Reminder 4b)
 se pou to have to, must
sè sister
sèjan sergeant
 sèjan fourye quartermaster

sergeant
sèkèy coffin, casket
sekretè assistant
seksyon section, district
sèl single, only; tremendous;
 saddle
sele to saddle
sèlman only
senkant fifty
Senmak Saint-Marc
senmenn week
senp simple
Sentsizàn Sainte-Suzanne
sere to tighten; tightly; to be sad
seriz coffee bean
serye serious
sèt seven
sètifika sixth grade; primary
 school diploma
sèvi to serve; to use
 sèvi ak to associate with, do
 business with
seye to try
sezi to seize; to be surprised
sezisman surprise, shock
sezon season
si if; so
Sid the South of Haiti
sigarèt cigarette
sik sugar
sikile to circulate
siklòn hurricane, cyclone
sikonstans circumstance
silans silence
siperyè superior
sis six
sispann to quit, stop
sispèk to suspect; worried,
 uneasy
sitèlman so very
sitirasyon situation
sitou especially

siveye to watch, keep an eye on
siwèl red mombin, hogplum tree
siy signal
siyay path, wake, footsteps
siye to wipe
sòlda soldier
solèy sun
solid solid, strong
son sound
sonnen to ring
sot *see sòti*
sòt ignorant, stupid
sòti, sot to leave, get out, go out;
 to have just
sou on, at, upon, in presence of;
 concerning; with
souf breath
soufle to blow
soufri to suffer
souke to shake
soukèdlawouze rural police
 deputy
soulye shoe
souri to smile
soutni to hold, sustain
souvan often
sove to save
swa evening
 swa... osinon either... or
swasant sixty
swe to sweat, perspire
swè sweat, perspiration
swiv to follow
syèl sky

T

t *past tense indicator (see*
 Grammar Reminder 3c)
ta *late; conditional indicator*
 (see Grammar Reminder
 3e); would

- tab** table
tabak tobacco
tach bark (of palm tree)
tan time; weather; *see gen tan*
tanbou drum
tande to hear, hear about
tank so much, inasmuch as
tankou as, like
tanmen to begin to
tann to wait, wait for, expect
tanzantan sometimes, from time to time
tape to type
taye to cut, trim
tayè tailoring
tchak bad, disagreeable; complicated
tchwe to kill; to put out, extinguish
tchwe lanp jacket which is ridiculously long for its wearer
te tea; *past tense indicator (see Grammar Reminder 3c)*
tè land
tèlman so, so much, so many
teri to land, arrive, get to
tèt head; *reflexive indicator (see Grammar Reminder 9b); see parèt tèt; pran tèt*
tèt anba upside down
tèt chaje burden, worry, 'pain in the neck'
tèt gridap small oil lamp
tetyè sisal head harness for horse or donkey
ti little; elementary
ti kras tiny bit
tibebe baby, infant
tikatkat toddler, little kid
timoun child
tiraj withdrawal
tire to take out, withdraw; to milk
tire yon kont to tell a tale or story
tivant lower abdomen
tiwa drawer
tiyo pipe; fountain, water source
tizonnen to bait, harass, jab at
tòdye to twist
tonbe to fall; to befall, occur
tonbe pou to fall in love with
tonm tomb, grave
tonnèl arbor, bower, outdoor shelter
tonton uncle; old man; fellow; *see makout*
toptop right away
tou too, also; all; quite; tour; at the same time, immediately; two (*when mimicking English*)
toude both
toudisman vertigo, dizzy spell
toujou always
tounen to return; to turn, become
tout all, everything; whole; every
toutan all the time
toutbon really
toutlasentjounen all the live-long day
touye to kill; to put out, extinguish
trafik dealings
traka trouble, worry
tranpe to soak; soaked
transfere to transfer
travay to work; work, job
tray suffering
trese to weave, braid

tri three (*when mimicking English*)
trimay lowly or painful task
trimen to work hard
tris sad
twā three
twal material, fabric
twalèt grooming
fè twalèt to dress, groom
twazan three years
twazyèm third
twò, twòp too, too much
twou hole; predicament
twouve to find

V

va *future indicator (see Grammar Reminder 3d)*
vakabon bum, scoundrel
vakans vacation
van wind
vandredi Friday
vann to sell
vanse to advance; to approach
vant stomach
vantfèmal stomach ache
vè toward; around, about, approximately
ven twenty
vennsenk twenty-five
vèso container, vessel
veye funeral wake
vini, vin to come; to become (*see Grammar Reminder 7e*)
vin wè let alone
vire to turn; to change
viretounen ups and downs
viv to live
vizit visit
fè vizit to visit
vle to wish, want

vle di to mean
vlope to fold; to wrap
vòlò to steal
voltefas about-face
vòt vote; election
vote to vote
voye to send; to throw
voye chache to send for
voye je to look, glance; to watch
vre true; really
vwala here is (are), there is (are)
vwayaj trip
vwayaje to travel
vwazinay neighbor; neighboring community
vyann meat, flesh
vye old
vye koze nonsense, bullshit

W

wa king
Wachintonn Washington
wanga magic charm, talisman
wann one (*when mimicking English*)
watè toilet
wè to see; to do (with)
wete to remove, take out; to save
wi yes, indeed
men wi yes indeed, certainly
wo tall, high
wòb dress
wobinèt faucet
Wobyon Robion
woman novel
wonm rum
wonpe! dismissed!
wotè height

wou hoe
woufò Voodoo temple
wouj red
woujat reddish mulatto
woule to roll, move; to run
 (machine)
woulman rotation, exchange
wout road; trip
wouye rusty, out of practice

peasants
zeklè lightning
zèl wing
zen news, gossip
zepòl shoulder
zepolèt epaulette
zo bone
zòrèy ear
zotobre big shot, VIP

Y

y *see* **yo**
ye to be (*see Grammar*
Reminder 4c)
yeye someone totally washed
 up, a loser (*familiar term*)
yo, y they, their, them; *plural*
indicator (see Grammar
Reminder 2e); reflexive
pronoun (see Grammar
Reminder 9a); see sa
yon a, an
youn one (*pronoun*)

Z

zafè business, affairs; things,
 belongings
zagribay loafer, no-count, punk
zan years
zanmi friend
zannanna pineapple; *see kann*
zannanna
zannimo animal
zè hours; o'clock
zèb grass
zèdtan hours
zefi light-textured blue cloth
 widely used by Haitian

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